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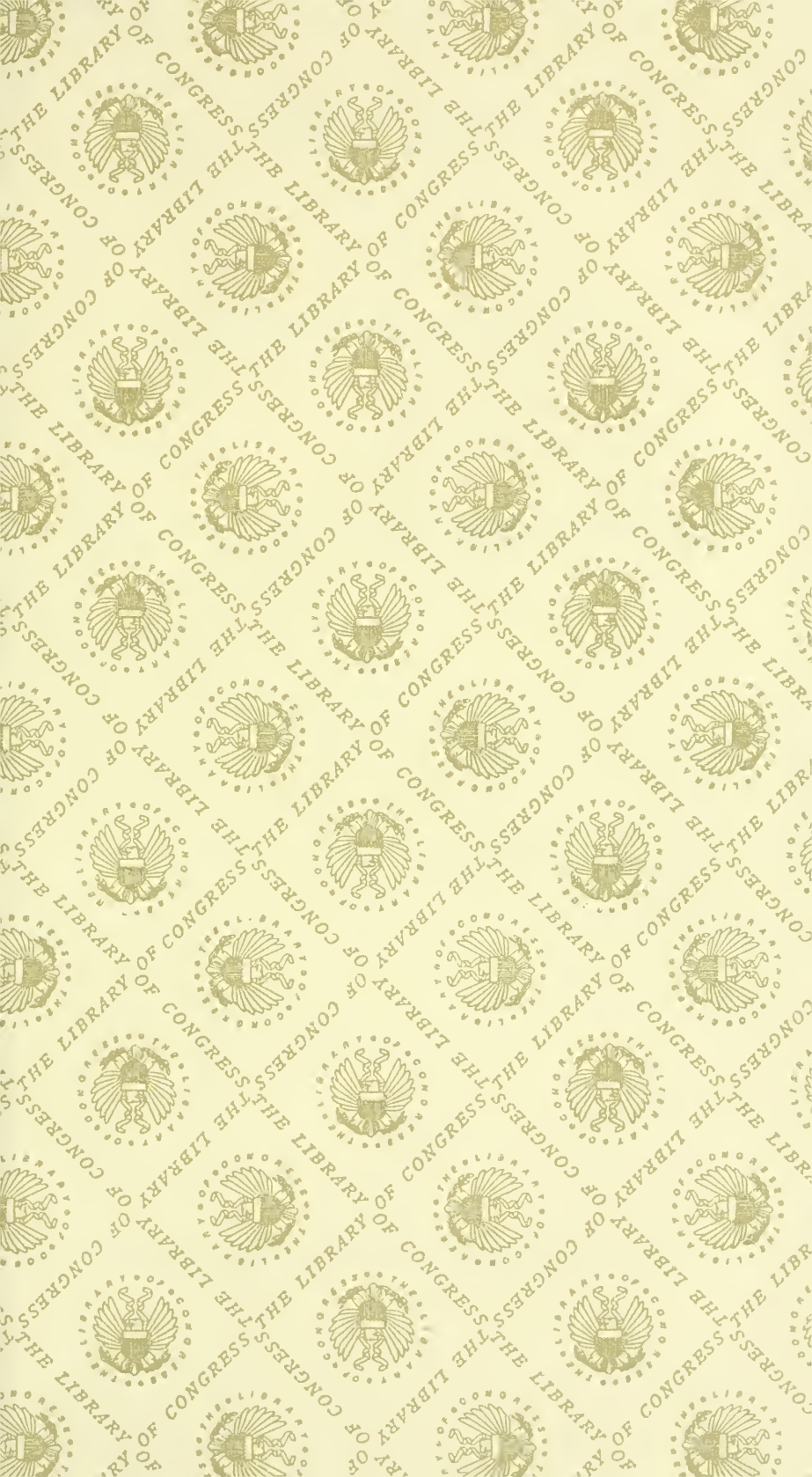


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# REPORT

OF THE

## COMMITTEE ON SLAVERY,

TO THE

### Convention of Congregational Ministers

OF

### MASSACHUSETTS.

PRESENTED MAY 30, 1849.

*Congregational Churches of Mass.*

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BOSTON :

PRESS OF T. R. MARVIN, 24 CONGRESS STREET.

1849.

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*Extracts from Minutes of the Convention of Congregational Ministers of Massachusetts.*

THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 1848.

*Resolved*, That a Committee of nine be appointed to prepare a Report,—to be presented at the next Annual Meeting of this Convention,—containing a brief history of the rise and progress of Slavery in our country, a view of the responsibility of the free States in regard to it, and a calm and temperate, but solemn and earnest appeal to the community on this momentous subject.\*

The following members were appointed :—Dr. Lowell, of Boston ; Dr. Hitchcock, of Randolph ; Dr. Storrs, of Braintree ; Mr. Thompson, of Salem ; Dr. Worcester, of Salem ; Mr. Briggs, of Plymouth ; Mr. Hill, of Worcester ; Dr. Child, of Lowell ; Mr. Lothrop, of Boston.

THURSDAY, MAY 31, 1849.

*Voted*, That the Committee on Slavery be authorized to publish the following resolution in connection with their Report :

*Resolved*, That the Convention, having listened to a full Abstract of the Document prepared by the Committee appointed last year to consider and report upon the subject of Slavery, approve of the general principles and results of the same ; and without holding themselves responsible for its particular arguments and illustrations, hereby authorize its publication, in such way as said Committee may deem best, and can effect, without drawing upon the funds of the Convention, which are sacredly appropriated to the relief of the widows and orphans of our deceased brethren.

A true copy.—Attest,

A. C. THOMPSON,  
*Scribe of Convention.*

The “ Abstract ” to which the last vote of the Convention refers, and which was read, the afternoon previous, contained, as is intimated, a very full synopsis of the Report. It embodied all the important principles and doctrines, premises and conclusions, which are presented in the following pages ; and, perhaps, if it had been submitted as

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\* On motion of Dr. Lowell.

the Report itself, would alone have been sufficient to assure the Convention, that the Committee had not lightly regarded the service, to which they had been called.

After considerable discussion in regard to the question of hearing the "Abstract" or the whole "Report," it was decided that the former should be read. It was received with a very marked expression of approval, and was immediately *adopted*;—a single hand only being raised in the negative, and this not being observed by the Chairman, the vote was declared to be unanimous. The whole Report was then re-committed, with authority to publish it, provided the means of defraying the expense could be secured by the Committee.

From the animated and earnest response, on all sides, to the sentiments and statements of the "Abstract," the Committee are confident that if the time could have been found for a hearing of the full Report—and if the whole of our numerous body, exceeding five hundred members, could have been present—the Report itself, in all its length and breadth, would have received the sanction and seal of a prompt and cordial adoption, by an overwhelming, if not unanimous vote. They are sure, that no exception would have been taken, by any considerable number, to any part of the Report which the Committee themselves would be solicitous to retain, as being indispensable, or quite essential, to their main argument and appeal. And they deem it proper to add, that they have sought to execute their commission with a just sense of the magnitude of their responsibility; and, as they trust, with fervent supplication to the "Father of lights," from whom "cometh down every good gift and every perfect gift."

By agreement in the Committee, soon after their appointment, each member was assigned a specific part of the general subject, in order that the work might be more effectually performed, than could reasonably have been anticipated, if the whole labor had been imposed upon any one member, or even upon a sub-committee. With a single exception, the members have all, more or less, contributed to the preparation of the Report. As an unavoidable consequence, it is somewhat more detailed and less comprehensive, than it might otherwise have been. The Committee would hope, however, that with all its defects, it will be found to be essentially homogeneous; and as a whole, not unworthy of the candid and attentive consideration of their brethren and of their fellow-citizens generally.



## REPORT.

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IN the examination of the subject before us, our attention is first called to the History of Slavery. Of this, however, an outline is all that we can present ; since a statement of the details, in their various connections, would be nothing short of a universal history.

The first slaves, it is believed, were captives in war. These were considered entirely at the disposal of their captors, and a life-long condition of bondage was probably felt to be an equitable commutation for their lives.\* There was also this feature of equity in the system, that its oppressions were not restricted to a single race, nor dependent upon shades of complexion. Nor did slavery in the earliest times present an insuperable barrier to ambition, and reduce to a dead level of outward condition all grades of intellectual and moral power. Thus we find Joseph becoming prime minister of Egypt, and this, too, without sacrificing his religion to the prejudices of that country.

Though we have no means of determining the exact relation and treatment of slaves, at so early a period, yet it is sufficiently clear, that the bondage of the Israelites in Egypt was of a political, rather than of a personal character. They were not the private property of individuals, but were compelled to labor upon public works. They certainly were not disabled from acquiring and retaining private property ; and it is probable, that their condition was not worse than that of the lower orders of the Egyptians themselves. Moreover, a purely political reason is assigned for the oppressions which were heaped upon them. After their establishment in the promised land, a system of slavery was tolerated among them, but very different in

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\* “The Latin word ‘servus,’ a *slave*, appears to have been derived from ‘servo,’ I *preserve*, and to have meant a person whose life was preserved on condition of giving his labor to his conqueror ; so that slavery, how repulsive soever to our present feelings, probably formed at one time an important mitigation of the horrors of barbarism.”—*Brande's Encyclopedia, Art. Slavery.*

some important particulars from that existing among their contemporaries in any part of the world. In our examination of the Scriptures, with reference to this subject generally, we shall have occasion to describe the servitude which existed under the laws of Moses, somewhat minutely. It is sufficient, therefore, to remark in this place, that the Hebrews were taught by the principles and by the precepts of their religion, that personal freedom is an inestimable privilege; and, that wherever involuntary servitude is found to exist, the evils attending it, whether physical or moral, ought, as far as possible, to be mitigated and diminished, in obedience to the law of love to God and love to man. In general, the requirements of the Mosaic code respecting servants who were of the Hebrews, and "bond-men" and "bond-maids" that might be bought of the heathen, were so far observed, that the actual condition of this class of persons in the land of Israel must have been incomparably superior to that of the slaves among the Gentiles. And the evidence is ample and decisive, that even the system of slavery which Moses did not prohibit, but, to a certain extent, suffered to remain among the chosen people, was continually in conflict with uncompromising antagonistical elements, both in the means and ends of the beneficent institutions of the Hebrew commonwealth. The natural effect of those institutions was, to ameliorate the condition of slaves in every respect, and ultimately to abolish the practice of slave-holding. It is a fact worthy of particular notice in this connection, that *if a bond-woman bore a child to her master, the child followed the condition of the father.* The doctrine of *partus sequitur ventrem*, is of much later origin.

In several respects the condition of slaves in Mohammedan nations has been similar to that of those among the ancient Israelites; and we shall therefore refer to it in this place, although out of chronological order.—Under Mohammedan law, slaves may compel their masters to set a price for their redemption, or to sell them to another master. The Turks make no distinction in the treatment of children born to them by their female slaves and those born in wedlock. The mother of a sultan may be a slave. Christian slaves also may obtain their freedom by professing Mohammedanism. In general, the treatment of slaves wherever this religion prevails, appears to partake of the lenity and humanity of the Jewish system. The condition of Christian captives in the Barbary States may appear to offer an exception; but the cruelties to which they were subjected, may be ascribed either to the desire of revenge, or the hope of extorting a larger or speedier ransom. To recent movements with reference to slavery in those States, we shall refer in another part of our Report.

Returning now to the ancient nations,—Homer may be cited in proof of the early existence of slavery among the Greeks. It is to be remembered, that Homer was an Asiatic, and his pictures of domestic life have often an Asiatic coloring. At most he is only authority for the slavery of captives of war. In the nature of things it would seem scarcely possible, that slaves could be numerous among a simple and hardy people.

Slaves in Greece were of two kinds. The Helots of Sparta were serfs (*adscripti glebæ*) who were bound to the soil which they cultivated, and on which they paid a certain rent. At Corinth and Athens, slaves were chattels personal. They became in time so numerous and skilful, that every species of handicraft was performed by them. With the exception of those employed in the mines, they seem to have been not unkindly treated. They were under the protection of law, and an Athenian slave could take refuge from the cruelty of his owner in the temple of Theseus. He could also compel his master to sell him; but whether he could buy his own freedom is doubtful. But whatever features of mildness slavery may have assumed among the Greeks, can any one, who is at all conversant with their history, believe that they ever reaped any moral or social advantage from it? Did any of them enjoy a purer or more ennobling freedom, by the ignominious thralldom of a portion of their community?

We find traces of slavery in the earliest history of Rome. Slaves, however, were, at first, very few in number. They were captives, were employed in agriculture, and were treated, probably, like other servants. We find that they sat at the same table with their masters. As luxury increased, the number of slaves became larger. And beside the immense multitude of captives taken in the constant wars of the republic, there grew up a regular slave trade, by which slaves were procured from Asia and Africa. Nevertheless, the dealers in slaves were a disreputable and odious class; and were not allowed to assume the title of merchants.

While the Roman laws allowed the exercise of great severity in the treatment of slaves, even to the extent of taking life, there were yet some important advantages enjoyed by the slaves, as compared with those of our own country. The slave, under certain prescribed conditions, could acquire property. There was no bar to his emancipation by his master, and he became a citizen as soon as emancipated. When slaves were sold, families could not be separated. The general condition of the slaves improved gradually with the advance of Christianity, and the system itself finally disappeared—either being merged in the serfdom of the feudal institutions, or abolished altogether.

From that serfdom to entire enfranchisement, the progress was gradual, but steady. The law seems to have leaned strongly toward liberty; and the lawyers were strenuous in asserting the most liberal interpretation of it. In this way the lord's tenure of his serf was rendered as uncertain and vexatious as possible. What was unjust was made inconvenient. The popular element of the commonwealth asserted itself with more and more distinctness; and serfdom crumbled away like those material relics of the past which are disinterred from ancient repositories of the dead, by the simple contact of a freer atmosphere.

In looking at the several species of human bondage, at which we have thus glanced, while our sympathies are appealed to by their evident injustice, the mind is not impressed with any logical inconsequence. They were in keeping with the spirit and principles of the times. But in considering the slavery of the African race in America, not only are we pained by its inhumanity and its open breach of the acknowledged principles of justice, but we are sensible that it is an anachronism.

Slavery in the ancient world, and at the present day in the East, appears a natural and necessary part of the political fabric. It is supported on every side by kindred institutions, like a stone in mosaic. Natural justice has been the same in all ages; but the limits to the view which each generation is enabled to take of it, are in a great measure defined by habit, education and surrounding circumstances. Thus we find even Luther, taking sides against the insurgent serfs, because the absorption of his mind in one object, as we may conjecture, did not allow him to perceive, that their movement was a fair political corollary from the premises which he had established in spiritual matters. In this way we may conceive, that certain forms of the social system which the pure reason must disown, may still be in unison with the demands of the reasoning faculty, as logical deductions from premises universally granted. But American slavery has no such congruity. On the contrary, it is in direct antagonism to the premises on which our government rests; and involves us every day in fresh contradictions and compromises.

We have now reached the point in our survey where it is proper to state the leading facts in the history of American Slavery—passing at once from the ancient to the modern aspect of the institution.

The first negroes, enslaved by a Christian nation in modern times, were brought to Portugal, about fifty years before the discovery of America. Some of their enslavers, in the first instance, were actuated by motives of benevolence; conceiving that the simple ceremony of baptism secured their eternal sal-



vation. From this chance seed, nevertheless, sprang the deadly upas of American slavery. The Portuguese gradually established a traffic in slaves, but not upon a very large scale; for, except as articles of luxury, there could be no great demand for them in Spain and Portugal. But the discovery of America, by opening new fields for their labor, soon rendered the business permanent and profitable.

As long as Isabella lived, her womanly sympathies were interposed between the happy and gentle islanders of the Caribbean group and their rapacious invaders. She succeeded in preventing their enslavement, at least in name. But Spain was far off and the gold mines were near. A system of involuntary and unrequited labor soon arose, which, shortly after the death of Isabella, assumed the name, as it had already displayed all the attributes, of Slavery. History has but faintly recorded (for words are weak) the atrocities of which the Spanish colonists were guilty toward that race which Columbus described as Christians in all but the name. They who read the past wisely, should not forget how Hayti, where slavery was first planted, went through a fearful purgation of blood and flame.

It is well known, that, when in the sixteenth century it was proposed to different powers of Europe to legislate for the transportation of Africans, as slaves, to supply the alleged necessities of the colonies in America, the purpose shocked the moral sense of all Christendom! And yet not a thousandth part of the atrocities of the slave-trade had begun to be known or imagined. It was only by the most artful and unwearied management and deception, that the sovereigns of Spain, France and England, were induced to give a partial and restricted indulgence to the detestable traffic. A dispute between the Franciscans who encouraged and the Dominicans who denounced both the slave-trade and the system of slavery, was adjudicated by Leo X., whose righteous decision was, that "*not only the Christian religion, but nature herself, cried out against Slavery!*"

The desire of gold had become only more insatiable by a partial satisfaction. The mines demanded new victims, and, the natives having been literally annihilated, the loss must be supplied from Africa. For more than three hundred years the trade in human flesh has been carried on. For more than three hundred years the slave-ship has been almost the only messenger which Christendom has sent forth to Africa. Denounced by all civilized men, this accursed traffic has still continued to flourish, and must continue while the system that gives it life is tolerated. It should be for our instruction and our gratitude, that our New England ancestors, true to their principles and their piety, strenuously, though ineffectually, withstood the in-

roduction of slaves amongst them. But subject as they were to the overshadowing power of the mother country, they could not do as they would; and a minority of the population prevailed against a decided preponderance of public sentiment.

Sir John Hawkins was the first Englishman who made a voyage to the African coast for slaves. In his second venture Royalty went partner. Slaves were introduced into the English colonies in America as soon as it became profitable to introduce them. In Massachusetts the system of slavery never took kindly root, and the first efforts for its abolition were made here. Early in the history of the colony, the captain of a vessel who had brought some negroes hither from Africa was ordered by the General Court to carry them back; and by the very act which gave her existence as an independent State, Massachusetts proclaimed liberty to her bond-men.

If it be undeniable, that a portion of New England commerce for many years participated largely in the "merchandize" of men, it was with no better defence than "the son of perdition" could have made for betraying his Lord "to be crucified and slain." The public sentiment of Massachusetts, and of New England generally, was irreconcilably opposed to the principle and the practice of slave-holding; and the intervals were brief, if they occurred at all, in which there were not in the pulpit and out of the pulpit, unsleeping and indomitable witnesses for truth and righteousness, who "lifted up their voice like a trumpet" and "spared not," while a portion of their fellow-citizens, with a few "brethren in the Lord," delayed to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free.

But the two great crises in the history of American slavery, and the consideration of which will be more immediately to our purpose, were the adoption of the Federal Constitution in 1787, and the admission of Missouri as a slave State in 1820.

After the war of the Revolution had been brought to an end, it was very generally felt that the holding of slaves was grossly inconsistent with the principles on which were grounded our own claims to freedom. Though the Declaration of Independence, inspired by the sublimity of the occasion, laid down axioms in advance of the public opinion and practice of the day, it accorded well with the undefined feeling of an excited people. But when the ennobling and invigorating impulse of a struggle for liberty was withdrawn from men's minds and allowed them to recede to their habitual level, and when selfish interests were enabled to renew their hold, it was found that the love of gain had lost none of its power; and the conduct of the several States in regard to slavery, was far too much graduated by the scale of profit. In the Eastern States, heredi-

tary or acquired principles of justice and mercy, unquestionably exerted a paramount influence to bring about emancipation. But we cannot concede them an unqualified commendation on this score; because a supposed commercial interest was permitted to prevail against the decisions of public sentiment, in regard to the impolicy and wickedness of the slave-trade.

We have called the period of the adoption of the Federal Constitution a crisis in the history of slavery; because at that time the slave-power, which has since made such formidable usurpations, was a trembling petitioner for the license even to exist at all.

A reference to the "Madison Papers" will show, that a continuance of the slave-trade till the year 1808, was conceded to the clamors of South Carolina and Georgia; and we think it clear even from such fragments as remain to us of the debates of the Federal Convention, that the majority of the members of that body looked upon the extinction of the slave-trade and of slavery as synonymous. And it was universally supposed at that time, that the number of slaves could only be kept from diminishing by fresh importations. For this reason the word Slave was carefully excluded from the Constitution, that, when Human Bondage became a thing of the past, no trace of its existence, even, much less suspicion of connivance, should leave its stain upon that instrument. "I think it wrong to admit in the Constitution the idea that there can be property in man." So said Mr. Madison in the Convention, and in so saying he echoed the sentiments of a large majority of the members from all sections of the country. Throughout the debates on the slavery-clauses of the Constitution, it is very clear, that the advocates of slavery acted entirely on the defensive. It could not well be otherwise, since almost every statesman, eminent in those early days of the Republic, has left on record his unqualified condemnation of the system. Some of the heartiest denouncers of slavery were from Maryland and Virginia.

But in the thirty-three years which had elapsed between the adoption of the Federal Constitution, and the admission of Missouri, the posture of affairs had entirely changed. Slavery now for the first time became aggressive, and the protection of liberty which was intended to be the rule of our government, had grown to be the rare exception. By the stopping of the foreign slave-trade, and the stimulus which the domestic traffic received from the increase of territory, Maryland and Virginia had been seduced from their allegiance to higher and humane sentiments, and had already become the Guinea Coast of America. The admission of Missouri, by what was falsely termed a compromise, for there can be no compromise with what is absolutely wrong, no truce between God and Satan,—threw at



once the *prestige* of victory and a control of the balance of power upon the side of the slave-holders. Since that fatal and perfidious day, Freedom has been constantly driven to the wall. A small aristocracy, insignificant in point of numbers, and justly obnoxious to Christian freemen from the basis on which their claim to superiority rests, scattered over a wide extent of territory and only compact in a strenuous devotion to a common interest, have swayed the destinies of this mighty nation, and shaped its future, as far as possible, to a necessary coincidence with its mistaken and repented past.

In comparing American slavery with the modes of servitude which have existed among other nations and in other ages of the world, we find that, although agreeing with some of them in many particulars, it differs in one important point from them all. Slavery, wherever and whenever it has elsewhere existed, has been as impartial as death. There was no one whom the chances of fortune or war might not one day or other reduce to bondage. But with us, complexion has been made the criterion for determining the capacity of a human being for freedom. It is a singular fact, that, while the African physiognomy and complexion are such as to unfit their unhappy possessor for taking care of himself, and such also as to render liberty a curse, yet the reward with which the American master repays any act of peculiar devotion or fidelity on the part of his slave, is emancipation!

Another distinguishing characteristic of American slavery is, that it is not only permitted but actually fostered by a nation foremost of all in receiving, publishing, and, in many respects, exemplifying the great idea of Human Brotherhood. It is congenerous with nothing in our political system, and is a constant reproach to our profession of the religion of Christ. The slave-holder of ancient times, if called on for his title, appealed to what was then the acknowledged law of nations, which gave the captor power of life and death over his captive. "All that a man hath will he give for his life," and accordingly a species of contract was supposed between master and slave, the slave rendering service as an equivalent for life. It is vain to seek any such foundation for American slavery. Here the slave-holder justifies himself, either by the color of his victim, claiming to be only a fulfiller of the prophecies and an instrument of God's vengeance; or he appeals to the fact, that his inheritance of oppression was devolved upon him from his ancestors; thus endeavoring to defend the continuance of a wrong, by showing that it is of ancient date, and to give injustice a title by prescription. Called upon to produce his original title, he is forced to go back to the *jus gentium* of lawless savages on the coast of Africa, or is driven finally to seek refuge behind



the right of the strongest ; a right accidental in its nature, and peculiar neither to white nor black, but liable to change hands, as it already has done in Hayti.

We here bring this preliminary part of our Report to a close. By presenting an outline of its history, we have hoped to give a clear and just idea of Slavery as it has actually existed in different ages and nations of the world, from the beginning to this day. But there is one part of that history which, connected as it is with Divine Revelation, constitutes a topic by itself, and demands an extended and careful examination. We refer to what is contained in the Scriptures on the subject. We have devoted much attention to this branch of our inquiry,—deeming it of the highest importance ; and we proceed to exhibit at length the train of investigation which we have pursued, with the results which we have reached.

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In vindication of Slavery, an appeal has often been made to the Scriptures, as if the slave-holder had authority from God, to retain and employ his slaves, at his option and discretion. On the other hand, it has been affirmed by some, that the Scriptures, not only contain no warrant for modern slave-holding, but that slavery itself had no existence among the ancient Hebrews, or in the families of any who are recognized as God's sincere friends,—whether under the Mosaic or the Christian dispensation. Is the truth in either of these extremes ? We think not.

There are those who cannot account for the toleration or permission of slavery, among the Hebrews, without impeaching the Divine character. With others, the great difficulty is, to explain the commonly received interpretations of the Word of God,—if the relation of master and slave has always implied guilt on the part of the master. And there is certainly an apparent, if not real conflict between natural and revealed religion, in some of the views which have often been presented, both on the one side and the other of the question,—“Whether it be morally right to hold our fellow man as a slave.”

In searching the Scriptures our object has been to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the truth and the whole truth, in answer to the question, which we regard as the grand question of all, viz.—“Do the Scriptures sanction slavery, as it exists in the United States, and as it has here been legalized ?” With one voice, and without any reservation or qualification, we are prepared to answer, NO.

We are unable to find any contradiction in the Scriptures to the self-evident truth of reason, and of natural religion, that there is no natural right in the relation of master and slave.—Have we not all one Father?—Still, it may, and as we think, must be conceded, that circumstances, under the providence of the Supreme Disposer of events, may so far modify natural right or natural wrong, that, while a system or an institution may be unwarranted and criminal,—the personal guilt and innocence of individuals may be materially affected by their social position, their knowledge, their motives, feelings and purposes.

As another preliminary suggestion, we deem it important to remark, that, as the present use of words may be no guide to their etymology, and as neither present use nor etymology may determine or indicate their true meaning, at certain periods of national progress,—it is illogical and unsafe to infer what slavery was at the beginning, from what it has since become; or that slavery in any given example, is or was the same as in any other example.

Slavery, at the present day, is every where understood to imply coercion; and coercion of that kind and degree, to which, in general, none would submit, if they were not kept in subjection by laws framed for the express purpose of protecting the master, against the assertion of natural rights by the slave, and his claim to be regarded as a fellow-man and a brother. They produce as their legitimate effect, a degraded and demoralizing inferiority and disability of social condition; or, at least, their whole tendency is to aggravate and perpetuate such a condition.

Hence we may well inquire whether the Scriptures of God, “who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things, and hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth,” are rightly interpreted, if supposed to contain any warrant for such laws; and thus a relation or social institution, which it would not be possible to sustain without them, can urge in its behalf the sanction of Divine approval.

Upon some subjects of importance, it is well known, the Scriptures are silent; upon others the instruction is explicit and full; while upon others still it is incidental or inferential. Of this latter kind is the witness respecting slavery. The relation of master and slave is neither required nor forbidden, by express commandment or ordinance, under the Mosaic or the Christian dispensation. And although tolerated and legalized, in the case of the Hebrews, but with most important limitations and counter-working provisions, slavery has no commendation or benediction from any of the “holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” There is thus a wide difference between the teaching of revealed truth, in regard to

the relation of master and slave, and that which pertains to civil government. Civil government is manifestly ordained of God. Loyalty in subjects is both enjoined and blessed. But the condition of the slave is always presented to us, as having no advantages but in a choice of evils; and as being most obviously, in a greater or less degree, a calamity or a curse; whatever may be inferred, in respect to the lawfulness or sinfulness of the relation of the master.

We cannot assent, therefore, to the bold statement of a very able writer in one of our religious periodicals, namely, that "slave-holding, in the scriptural view of it, belongs to a class of things indifferent, of things neither forbidden nor commanded in the word of God, which are right or wrong according to circumstances. It is like despotism in the state."\*

But we would earnestly inquire, Where has God taught us, that all things are "indifferent," if neither forbidden nor commanded by any express statute or prescription? And may it not be a very important inquiry, whether we have God's *permission* to do, what he has neither commanded nor forbidden us?

Suppose the present incumbent of the chair of the Presidency of the United States was able to make himself a dictator or emperor; and after establishing himself in power, should evidently aim to administer his government so as to command respect and secure esteem, as one of the greatest benefactors of his race? Could it be said, that he has a *right* to reign over this nation, because he *does* reign; or because civil government is of divine authority? And if his adherents should appeal to the Scriptures, to support his *despotism*—in opposition to the right of the people to rule themselves—would it be enough for them to say, "*The powers that be, are ordained of God?*"

We may concede, that the relation of a master to his slave may not always imply guilt in the master. But the right which is assumed to belong to him, by that relation, we utterly deny. Neither are we required, if allowed, in our moral estimate of slavery, to separate the relation from its accidents or incidents, as they may be called; and which are at present associated with the right, as claimed and exercised, hardly less intimately and invariably, than if inseparable properties, or, at least, unavoidable accompaniments.

And besides, if fully granted, that personal slave-holding, as distinguished from slavery, does not always imply guilt, we are entirely sure, that no slave-holder can be safe in *assuming* or *presuming* that he himself is *without* sin. It is a perilous con-

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\* Biblical Repertory, Jan. 1849, Art. I.

clusion, that there is sin in *no* case, because in some cases there *may be* none.

After God had created the founders of the race, "he blessed them, and said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it : and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed ; to you it shall be for meat." Can the relation of master and slave, or the right of slave-holding, be found in this ordinance ? And, moreover, it may be asked with much emphasis, How can slaves fulfill the purposes of this ordinance, according to its unquestionable import, both in respect to duty and privilege, in extending the domain of an enlightened and progressive civilization ?

When Noah and his family came forth from the ark, God said unto them, "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you, shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea ; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you ; even as the green herb have I given you all things." The right to use animals as "the green herb" for human sustenance, is the only additional right which God gave to Noah and his sons. The right of slave-holding is not in this ordinance, any more than in that delivered to Adam.

The original grant of property and dominion to the human race, is gratefully celebrated in the Psalms. (Ps. viii.) It is also introduced into the Epistle to the Hebrews, in a direct citation of the words of David. (Ch. ii.) But in neither case is there the least allusion to any such power or property, as that which is claimed as the right of a master, in respect to his slave.

If now such power or property has not been granted in either of those two great comprehensive ordinances of the Most High, —where else in the holy Scriptures, which are the Magna and the Maxima Charta of human rights and privileges, can the right of slave-holding be found ?

\* The first allusion to slavery, whether personal or political, is in the language of Noah, when, by a prophetic malediction, he so memorably rebuked the offence of Ham. "Cursed be Canaan ; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." These words of the father, but not the law-giver of all existing nations and families, have sometimes been most singularly misunderstood, or inexcusably perverted. In connection or con-



trast with the blessing upon Shem and Japheth, they have been explained, as if Noah *instituted* slavery, and by divine direction gave liberty to a part of his descendants, to enslave another part, throughout all generations. And by assuming that the Africans now in bondage are the posterity of Canaan, it has been maintained by some, that those who claim them as their property, and use them at their will, are entirely justified by the purpose of God. It has actually been pretended, that the Supreme Disposer of all things has decreed their perpetual servitude, to teach the world the duty of filial reverence and of civil obedience !

Such pretensions are too preposterous for sober denial. They involve absurdity upon absurdity, most palpable and most flagrant. It might just as rationally be maintained, that Noah gave plenary indulgence to excess of wine and to drunkenness, in all ages to the end of the world. Moreover, all right and wrong, all good and evil would become conventional and convertible names, or be mere distinctions without differences, if the words of prophecy were to be construed as justifying that mode of conduct, which, under divine control, ensures fulfilment, according to "the foreknowledge and determinate counsel of God." It could never have been, as it was, "*with wicked hands*," that "the Holy One and the Just" "was crucified and slain." And never could it have been said: "Truly the Son of Man goeth as it was determined: but wo unto that man by whom he is betrayed!"

The predictions of the prophets, and divine purposes, so far as made known, may be employed as encouragements to good and as dissuaves from evil. But it is in the *precepts*, or requirements of God, not in his purposes, nor in predictions, that we have the rule of duty and the standard of rectitude. Hence the language of Noah, when, by an inspired foreknowledge of the calamitous condition of the guilty and polluted Canaanites, he spoke as he did, in signal reproof of filial dishonor, furnished not the slightest warrant for the posterity of Shem and Japheth with all the other sons of Ham also, to enslave them, or in any way to oppress them. The prediction of the bondage of the Hebrews in Egypt, who were of the descendants of Shem, was just as fully a divine warrant to Pharaoh, to "set task masters over them," and "make their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field."

There is no apology for any mistake, as it regards the national identity of the descendants of Canaan. It is written in the Scriptures, that "Canaan begat Sidon his first-born, and Heth, and the Jebusite, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite, and the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite, and the Arvadite,

and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite; and afterward were the families of the Canaanites spread abroad. And the border of the Canaanites was from Sidon, as thou comest to Gerar, unto Gaza; as thou goest unto Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, even unto Lasha." (Gen. x. 15-19. Comp. 1 Chron. i. 13-16.)

As a race of men, they had become exceedingly corrupt, in the age when the Hebrews were led out of Egypt, to take possession of the land, which had been promised to Abraham and his seed. "The land," said the voice of God to Moses, "is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants." (Lev. xviii. 25.) It is not for any one to say, that this iniquity had no connection with the vile character of Ham, or of Canaan, who may have been a direct partaker of the sin, which indicated such ungodliness and uncleanness. There may have been also some special design in the record of the curse upon Canaan, both for the instruction and admonition of the chosen people; as they were then marching towards the country of the Canaanites, under the most solemn command to exterminate them. As the twelve tribes then were, and as the world was, through the abounding prevalence of idolatry, such signal inflictions of divine displeasure as they were called to witness, would appear to have been indispensable to convey to their minds a distinct and salutary perception of divine holiness and justice, and the consequent demerit of sin.

But there is no intimation that the Hebrews had their right to the land in consequence of the curse of Noah, or that the woes which God had determined to inflict, were retrospectively and primarily to be considered a visitation of the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. It was most evidently for their own wickedness that the Canaanites were doomed to such a punishment, in the sight of all nations. For any thing that is written, therefore, or is fairly implied to the contrary, we must regard the offence of their progenitor, or progenitors, not as the *cause* of their punishment, but as the *occasion of its being foretold*. And the manner in which it was foretold, would naturally be a most humiliating rebuke to the offender, and a fearful warning to his posterity.

It is thus, that we interpret the offence of Hezekiah, and the judgment which was denounced, when he displayed his treasures to the messengers of the king of Babylon. His indiscretion and his pride were the *occasion* of the prophecy, but not the *cause* of the future sorrows of his children and his people.

In further confirmation of this view of the nature of the curse of Noah upon Canaan, we may cite the example of Jacob,

in his dying rebuke of Simeon and Levi:—"Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce: and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel." In the actual result, the sons of Levi, although "scattered in Israel," were recompensed for their pre-eminent faithfulness, (Ex. xxxii.) and exalted to the highest distinction of office and privilege. And the tribe of Simeon appears in history, under no marked disadvantages or reproaches, as compared with the other tribes; although "their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah." (Josh. xix.) It is obvious then that such a malediction as that of Noah, did not in any way determine, either the calamitous condition or the detestable character of those who were lineally designated as the sufferers.

We are not to suppose that they were sinners above all men, or that the calamities which came upon them were unparalleled and unequalled. In the days of Abraham, before "the iniquity of the Amorites" was "full," (Gen. xv. 16.) there were such men in the land as Abimelech of Gerar, and Melchizedek of Salem. The latter, certainly, must be numbered among the most "excellent," who have ever appeared "in the earth." He "received tithes of Abraham and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better."

The "seven nations" in Canaan were not wholly destroyed. "The Lord thy God," it was written, "will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beast of the field increase upon thee." (Deut. vii. 22.) The Jebusites held possession of a fortified eminence at Salem, or Jerusalem, until overpowered by David. And when Solomon needed a kind of labor, in erecting the temple, which he either was unable or unwilling to exact of his own people, he saw fit to "levy a tribute of bond-service" upon "the children that were left in the land," "of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites." (1 Kings ix.)

Powerful nations, also, were of the same immediate family origin, as those that were subjugated by the Hebrews. They had many *slaves*, and some of them "*traded the persons of men*," as they did "*vessels of brass*." (Ezek. xxvii. 13.) Such were the Syrians of Hamath, with a capital city rivalling Damascus; the Sidonians and Tyrians and the Phœnicians, so skilled in arts, so adventurous in commerce and colonization; and the Carthaginians, who, but for an oversight in their victorious Hannibal, might have dictated laws to Rome, and perchance to the known world.

All these, however, were in process of time subjected to nations yet more powerful, or more successful in war; and were

made to experience the severest forms of political servitude. Many among them were carried into captivity by their conquerors. A part or all were reduced, as we cannot doubt, to the lowest and most wretched condition of personal slavery. Thus in Palestine and out of Palestine, the prediction of Noah had a most ample fulfilment, long before ancient history had reached its last chapter.

And is it now to be seriously maintained, that *Africans* can be enslaved by Divine permission, in consequence of the "curse" pronounced upon Canaan, four thousand years ago? Let it first be shown, that any of them are *Canaanites*! It would be impossible to prove their descent from *either* of the sons of Ham. The Egyptians, as is indicated by their ancient name, may have been so descended. The colored race are quite as probably from Shem, if not from Japheth. And the Egyptians, with all the changes that have passed over them, have been slave-holders from the remotest antiquity.

There has been far too much taken for granted, in what has been so often repeated concerning an alleged division of the earth by Noah, soon after the waters of the flood had retired. An apportionment of Africa to Ham, of Europe to Japheth, and of Asia to Shem, is all a fiction on the very face of it; and none the less ridiculous, from the imposing gravity with which it has been taught, as if an axiom of geographical science. We have an authentic memorial of "a division of the earth," so called, which took place in the days of Peleg; or rather, perhaps, more strictly speaking, in the days of Eber, his father, who may be understood to have given the name, as a significant token of the event. Peleg was in the sixth generation from Noah. Not far from the time of his birth, probably, there appears to have been a convention of the leaders of different families, and an amicable distribution and settlement of territorial limits. It was a great event for the times. We may suppose it to have been peculiarly interesting to the Hebrews, from their ancestral relationship; and thus to have been specially noted in their genealogical tables. But no one, who has studied the Scriptures intelligently, needs to be informed, that "the earth" does not always mean *all* of it, or even a hundredth part of it. And we have no more reliable evidence of any personal apportionment of the three great divisions of the eastern hemisphere, between the three sons of Noah, or their descendants respectively, at any period whatever, than for the very learned and discriminating hypothesis, which has attributed the sable complexion of the negro to the mark of *Cain*, and hence deduced an argument for African enslavement!

In truth and soberness, it may be affirmed, that the whitest slave-holder of modern Christendom is as likely to have the



blood of Ham or of Canaan in his veins, as is any one, who, of all his slaves, may be the most

"guilty of a skin  
 Not colour'd like his own; and \* \* \*  
 \* \* \* for such a worthy cause  
 Doomed and devoted \* \* as his lawful prey."

With no more success, and with scarcely less of propriety, would a serious attempt be made, to identify the Congoes or any tribe of Africa, with Cain, the son of Adam, than with Canaan, the son of Ham!

We have before remarked, that the first allusion in the Scriptures to the subject of slavery, is found in that prophetic malediction. But the language of Noah would have been unintelligible, and therefore without effect as a rebuke for the offence, which was the occasion of its being uttered, if both he and his sons had not known of the existence of some mode of servitude, previous to the deluge. Who, then, it may be asked, were, in all probability, the first slave-holders? Were they of Seth and Enoch, the ancestors of Noah? Among whom would slavery have begun so naturally, as among the descendants of him, whose hands were crimsoned with the fraternal blood of righteous Abel? It certainly did not commence with the curse of Noah. And whence did it come, but from that "corruption" which so dreadfully abounded, when "the earth was filled with violence;" "and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart?" Whence also came polygamy and divorce?

The same essential spirit of "corruption" and "violence" was manifested among the descendants of Noah, before the living witnesses of the deluge could have ceased from the earth. And if the truth could be known, we have little doubt, that the first or the most responsible name for example and authority, in the reappearance of the custom or institution, would be that of Nimrod, a grandson of Ham, who "began to be a mighty one in the earth," and was the prototype of all the Nebuchadnezzars and Napoleons, great and small, that have since arisen, to scourge their fellow men.

He is said to have been "a mighty hunter before the Lord; and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar." (Gen. x. 9, 10.) His name is from a Hebrew word, which signifies "*to be disobedient, perverse, to rebel.*" And the Targum, on 1 Chron. i. 10, as quoted in a modern commentary, says of him,—"*Nimrod began to be a mighty man in sin, a murderer of innocent men, and a rebel before the Lord.*" The Jerusalem Targum says, "He was mighty in hunting, (or in prey,) and in sin before God; for he was a hunter of the children of men in their

languages; and he said unto them, *Depart from the religion of Shem; and cleave to the institutes of Nimrod.*" The same view is taken of him, in other ancient commentaries. "And the word, which we render *hunter*," says one of the most learned of English expositors, "signifies *prey*, and is applied in the Scriptures to *the hunting of men*, by persecution, oppression and tyranny. See Jer. xvi. 16; Lam. iii. 52; Prov. i. 17, 18; Zeph. iii. 6. Hence it is likely, that Nimrod, having acquired power, used it in tyranny and oppression."

As men departed from the worship of the true God, they appear to have also departed from love to one another. Practices and customs were introduced and established, which were too congenial to their selfish passions and propensities, not to be extensively adopted by those, who had the power and the opportunity. As idolatry prevailed, man would depreciate in the estimation of his fellow man, and no just ideas of his standing and his worth, as "made after the similitude of God," would have influence or even be conceived, but in very small measure and within very narrow limits.

In such a state of society, if society it can be called, which, in the early ages after the deluge, existed in the countries watered by the Euphrates and the Tigris, it is not surprising, that captives in war should have been held in bondage; and that the rank of the mighty or the opulent should be estimated in part by the number of their men-servants and maid-servants. Neither is it at all unaccountable, that men who "feared God," "and through faith, wrought righteousness," like Abraham and Job, should have so far conformed, as it would seem that they did, to what appears to have been the universal custom, in the larger households of Mesopotamia, Arabia, Egypt, and all other lands, during the age which is commonly known as the patriarchal.

The Man of Uz "was the greatest of all the men of the east." Whether the men-servants and maid-servants of his "very great household," were *slaves*, it might not be found easy to show by such kind of proof, as would be demanded by the rules of legal evidence. The original terms, like our own word "*servant*," may or may not have denoted bond-men and bond-maids. But all the circumstances render it highly probable, that very many in his household were "bought with his money," or were "born in his house," as were the servants of Abraham, and were held by him as a part of his estate, somewhat as the serfs of Russia and Poland, or as those in servile tenure under the *feudal law* of the Middle Ages, who might be "annexed to the manor," or might be "annexed to the person of their lord, and be transferable from one to another." Of his feelings towards them, his recognition of their natural rights,

and his conscientious endeavors to treat them, as a man who would always "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God,"—a most honorable testimony has been recorded, as if none could have the effrontery to gainsay it, although the language of his own lips: "If I did despise the cause of my manservant or of my maid-servant, when they contended with me; what then shall I do when God riseth up? And when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? DID NOT HE THAT MADE ME IN THE WOMB MAKE HIM? AND DID NOT ONE FASHION US IN THE WOMB?" (Job xxxi. 13-15.)

The mode of life of the Man of Uz may be very well illustrated, by that which is still seen in that of a rich and powerful Arabic Emîr or Sheik. It was, doubtless, intermediate between the nomadic pastoral life, and the settled manner of organized communities like ours. Very much the same was that of Abraham, who may have lived before him, or, as is quite probable, in the same age.

Some of the servants of the patriarch, perhaps the most, were received as presents; as those given him by Pharaoh and Abimelech. (Gen. xii. 16; xx. 14.) Many were "born in his house." But a part may have been "bought with his money." (Gen. xviii. 13.) Whether any of these were bought of third persons, who were traffickers in men, as merchandise, is much doubted by some, and is denied by others, who, on the contrary, believe that he bought none, except by their own choice, or for their own benefit. That any of the patriarchs ever *sold* any of their servants, does not appear at all probable, from any thing which is found in their history.

During the great famine in the days of Joseph, a multitude of the Egyptians were glad to sell their lands and themselves for bread.

In those early times of lawlessness and rapine, the poor and defenceless among the nomadic and idolatrous tribes of Palestine and Arabia, would often find the temptation very strong to seek refuge in a home like Abraham's. The personal liberty surrendered might be much less than the value received. The price paid might be more a gratuity than a compensation. In our own country it is undoubtedly true, that slaves have sometimes been purchased in mercy to *them*; and not in the least for the advantage of the purchaser. And emancipated slaves, who have not known how to use their freedom "as not abusing it," or who have been disappointed in their hopes, have sometimes returned to their master, and implored him to receive them again, and permit them to be as they were before he gave them their liberty.

The comparative state of the bond and the free, in respect to means of improvement and enjoyment, nineteen centuries *be-*



fore Christ, must not, in the nineteenth century *after* Christ, be summarily decided by our own conception of the value of personal liberty, or by the common acceptation of the terms "*bond*," and "*free*," in the languages and literature of the most enlightened Christian nations.

That which *costs* money, is not always money, either in name or reality. A right of property may be claimed in the *labor* or *service* of a fellow-man ; and his service may have the form and designation of *bond-service* ; while yet he is not regarded as "goods or chattels," or as "a beast of burden," but as truly a *man*, in whom is "the spirit that goeth upward," and not "the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth."

What we know of Abraham's religious care of his household, forbids us to believe, that he could ever have looked upon any of his servants, as if mere *things*, or as like "the brutes that perish." They shared in all his religious privileges. They received the same seal of the covenant of promise. They were members of his family. He could confide in them, and trust arms in their hands, as if his own children. One was the steward of his house, and for a time was the heir apparent to the whole estate. Another was brought into a relation, which was accounted by himself and others, as next to the nearest.

With such facts as these before us, how can we doubt, that Abraham could have responded most cordially to the words of the Man of Uz : "Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us?" As he considered the liabilities of bond-servants among idolaters, he might also have responded to those other words, from the same lips, when the grave was so fervently desired,—as the place, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest ; the prisoners rest together ; they hear not the voice of the oppressor. *The small and the great are there ; and the servant is free from his master.*" (Job iii. 17-19.)

But what now if God, who "seeth the end from the beginning," and has adapted his moral government to men, as they are in their imperfections, errors and sins, was pleased to enter into covenant with Abraham, recognizing his existing relations to his household, without forbidding the continuance of any of them ; what if that covenant of promise, while extending forward and expanding through all coming time, was announced in terms and with provisions, which were exactly suited to affect, in the happiest manner, those existing relations ; suppose also, that those terms and provisions were in direct anticipation of that peculiar state of things, in which Abraham's descendants were led out of Egypt, to form and sustain a theocratic commonwealth,—is it a just or safe conclusion, that all those



relations of the patriarch may be considered *right*, in all circumstances, and agreeable to the divine will, among all nations and in all ages? And if Abraham could have "washed his hands in innocence," are modern slave-holders to feel that they can do likewise?

Who will contend, that the patriarchal system, in any of its distinctive features, was designed to be permanent? And can the example of the patriarchs, in the matter of bond-service, be any more a direction of duty, or a sanction of allowance to us, as Christians or as citizens, than their example in the relations of marriage? Would it be Christian, would it be right—if not prohibited by the laws of the land,—for a man now to take more wives than one, and as many as he should please? And where is the record or the proof of any intimation to the patriarchs, that bond-service is any more consistent with the natural rights of man, and the highest good of the race, than polygamy or concubinage is, with the original constitution of family order? The most, as it appears to us, that can be made of bond-service in the families of the patriarchs, as a precedent or apology for modern slave-holding, is, that the relation of master and slave may not be always, and in all imaginable circumstances, an actual wrong, or a real sin.

In regard to slavery, as found among the Hebrews, after the giving of the law, it is of great importance to bear in mind what has been already suggested, respecting the universal prevalence of the custom or institution. So far as can be ascertained, there had as yet been no ordinance in any kingdom or state, abolishing or restricting it. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."

Moses found his brethren slave-holders, as well as themselves in hard bondage to the Egyptians. (Ex. xii. 44.) If, then, slavery was not entirely prohibited, any more than polygamy and divorce at will, by the statutes of the Hebrew commonwealth, can it be said, that it was so authorized as to warrant slave-holding in Christian America? We believe not.

In each of the two tables of the moral law, there is a specific reference to men-servants and maid-servants. The terms are such as would have a full signification, if no bond-servants had been allowed in Israel. We must suppose, however, that servants of this class were really contemplated, and for reasons which illustrate the righteous and beneficent character of the fundamental principles of the sacred code of God's covenant people.

The Ten Commandments, although containing the essential rules of moral duty, which are applicable to all the race, to the end of time, were yet given in a form of words, specifically

adapted to the state of the Israelites, in things peculiar. Witness, for instance, the promise annexed to the fifth commandment. And now whether the references to men-servants and maid-servants, are to be understood as intimating or pre-supposing the perpetual lawfulness of bond-service, either among the chosen seed of Abraham, or among the Gentiles, who in Christ are "Abraham's seed," is a question, which we would neither attempt to evade, nor hastily and summarily to decide.

It is worthy of special attention, that, among the very first articles of the Mosaic code, after the record of the Ten Commandments, we find the statutes or ordinances which protected every Hebrew against the liabilities of bond-service. And it is also, perhaps, worthy of still more special attention, that for a Hebrew to "steal" one of his brethren, or to "make merchandise of him," or to "sell him," was a crime of the greatest enormity, and in all circumstances was to be punished with death. (Ex. xxi. 16; Deut. xxiv. 7.)

Can any thing less be inferred from such statutes, than a decisive testimony of a holy and just God, to the inherent dignity of man, and the natural inviolability of his person? And by the ceremonial part of the Sabbath, the great anniversary festivals, the Sabbatical or seventh year, with the thrilling scenes of the Jubilee throughout the land, in the fiftieth year, what less could have been intended, than a most instructive and impressive symbolization of the priceless liberty, which was the birth-right and the pledged inheritance of those, who were "servants unto God," and "not in bondage to any man?" "For unto me," said the God of Abraham, "the children of Israel are *servants*; they are my servants, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God!" (Lev. xxv. 55.)

And next to those Ten Commandments, no statutes of the Hebrew Lawgiver were written in such capitals of effulgent brightness, as those which enjoin an unceasing remembrance of the bondage in Egypt; that all the people, young and old together, might intelligently and most gratefully celebrate the glorious redemption, which had been achieved for them, by the right arm of their fathers' God. Witness a description of these, in the work of Josephus, upon the "Antiquities of the Jews."—"Let every one commemorate before God the benefits which he bestowed upon them, *at their deliverance out of the land of Egypt*; and this twice every day, both when the day begins and when the hour of sleep comes on,—gratitude being in its own nature a just thing, and serving not only by way of return for past, but also by way of invitation of future favors. They are also to inscribe the principal blessings they have received from God upon the doors, and show the same remembrance of

them on their arms ; as also they are to bear on their forehead, and their arm, those wonders which declare the power of God, and his good-will towards them, that God's readiness to bless them may appear every where conspicuous about them." (B. iv. C. viii. 13.)

The Israelites might be made *servants*, but not *bond-men*. (Lev. xxv. 39.) Six years was the longest period, in which a Hebrew could be held to serve any of his brethren of the seed of Abraham, unless by his own free and deliberate choice. (Ex. xxi. 2 ; Deut. xv. 12.) Whether he became a servant by the sale of himself ; or by inability to pay his debts ; or by being sold in his minority by his poor parents ; or by incurring the penalty of theft, or some other crime not capital,—he was always to be treated with fraternal kindness, as one of the privileged partakers of the Lord's covenant with their great progenitor. And when his term of service "as a hired servant and as a sojourner" had expired, he was to be discharged with valuable presents. "Thou shalt not let him go away empty. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy wine-press ; of that wherewith the Lord thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bond-man in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee ; therefore I command thee this thing to-day." (Lev. xxv. 40 ; Deut. xv. 12–15.)

If a Hebrew sold himself, in his penury and distress, to a rich "sojourner or stranger" in the land,—the law of his protection was explicit : "As a yearly hired servant shall he be with him ; and the other shall not rule with rigor over him in thy sight." (Lev. xxv. 53.) He was always redeemable by his near kindred or by himself ; and this fact implies that he might hold property by gift or inheritance, and that only his service accrued to his master. If not redeemed before the year of Jubilee, he then received his freedom, with all others of Hebrew origin, who had not voluntarily deprived themselves of their appropriate part in the general joy of emancipation.

The disobedience of the statutes, in respect to the rights of Hebrew servants, to their liberty, and to honorable remuneration, at the end of six years, became, in the days of Isaiah, a most aggravated crime of the people in Judah. (Is. lviii.) And in the days of Jeremiah, the same disobedience was one of the procuring causes of the captivity in Babylon. (Jer. xxxiv. 12–17.) But no inference against the design and excellence of a law, or system of polity, is to be drawn from the defiance of transgressors and the delinquency of magistrates.

The practical sentiment of the more enlightened and philanthropic among the people of God, at a very early period of their residence in Palestine, may have had a true expression, in a



later age, in the admirable injunctions of the son of Sirach : " Let thy soul love a good servant, and defraud him not of his liberty." " Unto the servant that is wise shall they that are free do service ; and he that hath knowledge will not grudge, when he is reformed." (Ecclus. vii. 21 ; x. 25.)

In the reign of Ahaz, an army of the kingdom of the Ten Tribes had brought back from an invasion of Judah, a great multitude of captives, for the purpose of making them bond-servants. As the conquerors approached Samaria, with the trophies of their success, they met with an indignant and effectual repulse from " a prophet of the Lord," and from " certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim." " Ye shall not bring in the captives hither ; for whereas we have offended against the Lord already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespass : for our trespass is great and there is fierce wrath against Israel. So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation. And the men which were expressed by name rose up and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm trees, to their brethren." (2 Chron. xxviii.)

The attempt to enslave the captives of Judah might be supposed to indicate that the Hebrews in their wars with heathen nations were accustomed to make slaves of their prisoners, as was the ancient practice, according to the generally received rights of conquest. To some extent this may have been done. But the evidence is wanting,—except, we believe, in respect to the wars, which were unavoidable in the conquest of Canaan. A part only of the Midianites, who had signally fallen under the Divine displeasure, were permitted to live ; and undoubtedly were intended for maid-servants. (Num. xxxi. 15-18. Comp. vs. 40.) The infidel sarcasm upon the proceeding is as groundless as it is abominable.

In marching to the land of promise, the Hebrews were obliged to pass through territories and near cities, which were not given them for possession or for spoil ; although the inhabitants might be compelled to be their tributaries. If these would submit without armed resistance, they were to be spared, and both their persons and property were to receive no violence. But if after rejecting the " proclamation of peace," they were subdued, all the males were devoted to destruction, but " the women and the little ones " were to be spared, and were to be considered as a part of the spoils. (Deut. xx. 10-14.) But these directions seem very evidently to have had immediate respect to the times, in which they were given ; and to have



been occasioned by those exigencies, which would naturally cease, after the people of Israel had become settled in the land, which God gave to their fathers. "Thus shalt thou do," it is said, "unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations. But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth : But thou shalt utterly destroy them, namely, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee : That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods ; so should ye sin against the Lord your God." (Deut. xx. 15-18.)

The injunctions to the Hebrews concerning the manner of conducting a siege of any city of their enemies, and the treatment of female captives, were very far from that spirit of rapine and brutality, which have been common in wars, both ancient and modern. (Deut. xx. 19, 20 ; xxi. 10-14.) And it may be noticed as a fact, which speaks whole volumes for the character of the Hebrews, as contrasted with other people of antiquity, that in the most degenerate periods, the worst of the abandoned kings of Israel had the reputation of being "*merciful*," in war. (1 Kings xx. 31.)

All the institutions of Moses were framed for a people who were never to have any part in war, but in self-defence, or as the appointed instruments of God's wrath upon the heathen. They were to be as in the best days of Solomon, who "had peace on all sides round about him : and Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba."

The whole Mosaic system was opposed to war ; and all that could possibly be asked of the blessings and security of peace, was promised to the people, if they would be faithful to their covenant with God.

Hence as war was no part of the policy of the Hebrew Commonwealth we may see a reason why the Hebrews were not forbidden to make captives, and reduce them to bondage. It was assumed that there would be no wars, except in circumstances analogous to those, for which directions had been given. And so far as appears, when, in subsequent periods, wars were undertaken, or were forced upon the people, it was not their custom to enslave the captives. Certain it is there is no statute on record, authorizing them to make war, after the manner of other nations ; and of course none, which allowed them to take captives and make slaves, at their discretion.

But as all nations had bond-servants, Moses would naturally have felt, that it was necessary to make some provision, by

which the desire of a part of the people could be gratified, and yet restrained and regulated. This he did, doubtless, under the divine sanction. And the way in which the Hebrews might legally become possessed of bond-men and bond-maids, and as we understand the statute, *the only way*, which was designed and anticipated, was by purchase of the heathen, that were round about them. "Both thy bond-men, and bond-maids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen that are round about you; of them shall ye buy bond-men and bond-maids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you, of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you, which they beget in your land, and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them for a possession: they shall be your bond-men forever." (Lev. xxv. 44-46.)

For the Canaanites, slavery was regarded as too great a privilege, or rather would have subjected the seed of Abraham to too great a hazard. Such was their bad faith, says an eminent archæologist, "the greatness of their numbers, and their deep rooted idolatry, that, had they been introduced under any circumstances whatever into the Israelitish community, they would certainly have endangered their existence as a people of God. The Gibeonites, the Kaphirites, the Beerothites and the inhabitants of Kirjath-jearim, having surreptitiously obtained a treaty with the Israelites, were made exceptions also, and were employed in the service of the Tabernacle." (Josh. ix. 1-27.) The "bond-service" which Solomon "levied" upon those that remained of the "Amorites" and their kindred tribes, was for a temporary purpose; and the whole procedure implies, that, as a people, they had been *free*, and by the subjugation of their fathers had not been reduced to slavery.

Those servants who were bought of the heathen, could be held in bondage, at pleasure, as an inheritance for the masters and their children. We must so interpret the statutes, whatever may have been the practical operation. (Lev. xxv. 46.) We cannot translate the Hebrew "*forever*," as synonymous with "*the year of jubilee*." It is indeed written: "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you, and ye shall return every man unto his possession and every man unto his family." (Lev. xxv. 10.) But this statute, as we must think, did not include bond-men and bond-maids from the heathen, as *inhabitants* of the land. Such must have been excepted, according to the common ideas of the people; and by the express terms of the statute which follows in the same chapter. "*Inhabitants*" were the same as *citizens*.

But how changed must have been the condition of those bond-servants! They might, it is true, be treated with a "rigor," which was forbidden, in respect to Hebrews. A marked distinction was doubtless intended to be made, to magnify the superiority of the chosen race. But those heathen servants were to be circumcised, were to be instructed in the doctrines and precepts of the true God, and were to partake of the great festivals, and other exalted privileges of the Hebrew Commonwealth.

When the national covenant was so solemnly made, under the direction of Moses, just before he disappeared from the sight of the people, we find "the stranger" in their camp, from "the hewer of wood" to "the drawer of water," standing before God, with the "captains" of the tribes, their "elders," their "officers" and all "the men of Israel," to "enter into covenant" with God, that he "might establish them for a people to himself." (Deut. xxix. 10-13.) Thus being regarded so much, as if Hebrews, the laws applicable to Hebrew servants would essentially operate in their favor.

A very great difference in their condition, as compared with slaves in other countries, must have been produced by the Sabbath alone. How much also by the exemption from labor on the days of public festivals and other solemnities, during every seventh year, when no seed was sown, and "the land enjoyed her Sabbaths!" Incomparably superior, in all respects, must have been the state of the Hebrew bond-servants, to that of those in other lands, where was no Sabbath for the slave, and no law of mercy or justice, sanctioned by the Judge of all.

The legitimate tendency of their social position, therefore, was not to rivet upon them and their children the chains of perpetual servitude; but to prepare them to be fully incorporated with the body-politic, as "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens." The knowledge of the superior advantages enjoyed by them, would be communicated to surrounding and even to more distant nations. And may it not be, that the spiritual benefits which they were to receive, was a reason, in the counsels of God, for permitting the people of Israel to bring them into their families in the relation of bond-servants?

Whenever the heathen were willing to renounce their idols and other abominations, the Israelites appear to have welcomed them to a full participation in their national and spiritual privileges. We are not aware, that in this point there was any respect of persons, as being free or in bonds. What can be more obvious, then, in this view of the privileges and immunities of bond-servants, than that many of them might very soon come to occupy a similar ground, to that of servants of Hebrew

origin, in their real claims to fraternal sympathy and kindness; and consequently, that a large proportion, at different times, and especially in the year of jubilee, would obtain entire and joyous manumission and citizenship? Hence it may have been a fact, as has been asserted upon the authority of learned men of the Hebrew race, that, in the year of jubilee, or of LIBERTY, as, according to Josephus, the term denotes, *all slaves were set free*, whatever their parentage. At least, this may have been true, in some instances.

We are not aware that the Israelites ever had any such numbers of bond-servants, as were to be found in some other ancient countries. It was designed that there should be a general equality and fraternity, such as could not well exist, where a few were opulent and the many were poor, or in comparative indigence. The face of the country and the climate would not admit of *plantations*, like those in our Southern States, or in the West Indies. The distribution of lands in small sections, that, if possible, every man might be a land-holder; the laws of inheritance, and redemption of property; the employment of the mass of the people, as tillers of the soil, or as shepherds; the very small number of great cities; the manifold obstacles to the acquisition of large estates; and more than all, the moral purpose of their institutions,—were incompatible with slaveholding, as an integral or vital part of the Mosaic polity. So far as it existed, slavery was an appendage, as by special legislation, or a constitutional compromise. Or, perhaps, there is reason enough to compare it to the disease of a limb, for which, as a remedy, amputation would be more to be dreaded, than toleration. Just so it was with polygamy, and the license of divorce.

We are expressly told by the “Lord of all,” that Moses “suffered” the people “to put away their wives,” not because “it was so from the beginning,” but because of their “hardness of heart.” (Mat. xix. 8.) They were not prepared for restrictions, which, in the light of the gospel, are seen to be of vital consequence to domestic purity and peace. Was not the same true of them, in respect to bond-service? And might not Moses have sometimes said, as did the apostle, “*I speak this by permission, and not of commandment!*”

But in all the earth there was no such liberty and no such happiness of home, as among the chosen people. By the Mosaic institutions they were exalted to heaven, as compared with all the world beside.

Whenever a slave made his escape from the surrounding heathen nations, and sought a residence among the tribes of Israel, he was not to be delivered up to his master. “He shall dwell with thee, even among you in that place which he shall



choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best : thou shalt not oppress him." (Deut. xxiii. 15, 16.) "The Lord your God is a God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward ; he doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger ; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Deut. x. 17-19.)

Of the Gentile race, it is unquestionable, that individuals rose to eminence in Israel, by their endowments and exertions, in the arts of war and peace. Even bond-servants were not denied honorable connections by marriage. An instance is given in 1 Chron. ii. 34, 35. "Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters ; and Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha. And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant, to wife."

Differences of color, which, in some cases, as it is believed, were not small, are not known to have presented any insuperable, if any opposing barrier, to elevation and social improvement. We certainly may so believe, if a "spouse" of Solomon when "in all his glory," could say of herself, what is represented in "The Song of Songs." (i. 5.)

Thus, to say no more, the mode of bond-service, in its contemplated and its actual character, as authorized and regulated by law, in the land of promise, must have exhibited a stupendous contrast of faith and virtue, brotherly kindness and charity, to the oppressive and merciless exactions and inflictions, so common and so natural, among the idolatrous nations of the earth.

We would now say distinctly, that, as we understand *the right* of the Israelites to hold bond-servants, it was wholly derived from divine permission. It was granted, or rather not denied to them, when emerging from a semi-barbarous state ; and when it would have been next to impossible to enforce an absolute prohibition of all servitude. The indulgence was given, under the same sovereign authority, which commanded as well as permitted them to take violent possession of the land of Canaan. It may have been in part, at least so far as the heathen were concerned, for an essentially similar reason. Joshua and his armies could never have been justified in driving out the Canaanites by sword and fire, unless the Ruler of nations had expressly directed them to do it, as the instruments of his righteous visitation upon those incorrigible sinners ; and for ulterior purposes, in his distinguishing mercy towards Abraham and his seed, and the countless millions of the Gentiles, who, in after ages were to be blest immeasurably in the great Redeemer of the world. Let no man impeach "the goodness"

or "the severity" of Him who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working!"

It must be admitted by any candid objector, that a civil, social or moral right, which does not exist naturally, may be created, or sanctioned, by a positive institution, or an extra-judicial ordinance of the Most High. Where, however, such an institution or ordinance does not apply in its provisions, or when it has fulfilled its purposes,—then what has been prescribed, granted, or countenanced, may be or may become an abomination and abhorrence. Would it now be acceptable to God to erect altars in Massachusetts, and offer whole burnt offerings thereon? And is there reason to think, that it would be any more agreeable to the divine will, if our legislature should add to the "Revised Statutes" the identical laws of Moses, respecting slavery?

It may also be suggested, that an act, or custom, or positive institution, when *right*, because commanded or permitted by divine authority, must be supposed to have tendencies and favorable influences upon the interests of virtue and happiness, which would have no existence, without the divine favor accompanying such command or permission. But in all cases, whatever depends upon mere permission, is to be judged in respect to its intrinsic character, or by the original and immutable ordinances of justice and mercy. Thus it is, that we decide against polygamy, and decide it to be wrong.

The Mosaic code was made, not for angels unfallen, but for men who had exceedingly "corrupted" their "way upon the earth."—Whatever may now be thought, many of those ceremonial provisions, which made "the law" so much "a yoke of bondage," in contrast with the "liberty" of the gospel, and which would be to us intolerable, were of the highest importance in the age of the Exodus, in teaching the twelve tribes the duty and the very idea of *holiness*. The restrictions to which they were subjected, were in many respects, so contrary to all their previous conceptions and habits, that, in considering the past, present and the future, their incomparable lawgiver demonstrated his "divine legation," in so admirably adapting the details of his mixed spiritual and ceremonial, civil and judicial system, to the community as it then was, and as it might afterwards become. Indulgences or allowances, with restraints, would be unavoidable. In our own day, if indulgences are tacitly or expressly granted, it is not to be understood, that the legislators who frame the statutes or regulations, in reference to any custom or practice, approve of that custom or practice. Quite the contrary is often the fact. And in many cases, the very necessity of a statute is a condemnation of the subject-matter which it is designed to regulate.

It appears to us, therefore, that modern slave-holding systems cannot be vindicated by an appeal to the existence of slavery among the Hebrews. *Slave-holders should now adduce the evidence of similar permission, unequivocal and indisputable.* The laws of Moses are not the laws of the world, or of any part of the world. The slave-holder must look elsewhere for his authority to buy and to hold bond-servants. Let him show, if he can, a title-deed, ratified and sealed by the hand of Him, who no longer confers exclusive privileges upon Jew or Gentile. God, in his infinite favor, has "provided some better thing for us."

We have been thus particular in our examination of the witness of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, because we regard this part of our work as of the highest importance. We have much more, that we should be glad to say, particularly in reference to the principles, the interior and pervading spirit of benignity and philanthropy, which the *letter* and external form of the laws and institutions of the Hebrew Commonwealth do not appear to have always suggested to those who have examined them. It may be our mistake or misapprehension, but it seems to us very manifest, that the *simple letter* of the Mosaic code, rather than its SPIRIT and LIFE, has been far too often and exclusively considered.

Suppose now, that the Hebrew religion, instead of being confined to a peculiar people, had been universal in its direct and immediate application; or, which would have been the same in effect,—suppose that all nations had become holy unto the Lord,—where would have been found the Gentiles to *steal men*, or to "make merchandise" of brethren? In the common acceptance of the term, *there would not have been a single slave upon the face of the earth!*

Hence it is as certain, as any moral demonstration can be, that except as punishment for crime,—*the real genius, the true spirit* of the Mosaic institutions, is utterly repugnant and destructive to all slave-holding and slavery! It is the spirit of UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, and therefore the genius of UNIVERSAL EMANCIPATION.

To the advocates of slave-holding who refer us to the Mosaic institutions or statutes, we may be allowed to say, that, "as ministers of the New Testament," so would we be of the Old; "not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life!" "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets!"

It was no fault of the law of Moses, that its spirituality and benignity were not more generally perceived and appreciated. The gospel of Christ is now rejected by many, and is far from having its perfect work, in those who acknowledge its immeasurable excellency. But neither the former nor the latter dispensation of the grace of God, is responsible for human perverseness and intractableness.

The civil and ceremonial provisions of the Mosaic system were accommodated to the condition of the chosen people, with ultimate designs, which required ages for their full development. And although most wise and excellent, in the circumstances of that people, and of the world, yet "the law made nothing perfect," as did "the bringing in of a better hope." "Having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things," the whole fabric of Moses was for a season only. It was not ordained of God to be perpetual. And can it be a question, whether, in "the grace and truth" which "came by Jesus Christ," there can be any less of the spirit of universal philanthropy and freedom, than in the positive and temporary institutions, or in the moral and fundamental principles of "the law," which "came by Moses?" As it regards the latter, there can be no room for a doubt. The gospel and the law, or the New Testament and the Old, are one and inseparable in those principles of righteousness and love, which, like the source of all being and blessing, are from everlasting to everlasting. And "if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious."

Happy would it have been with the Hebrews, if they had cordially obeyed the statutes of their sacred code, and had more diligently considered, so as to discern the spirit of their ritual. The Mosaic system, in a fair operation, would have put an entire end to all slave-holding among them.

There is no evidence, we believe, that such a place as a *slave-market* was ever known at Jerusalem, or in any of the cities of the land while the people preserved their independence. There is no mention of "the persons of men," among the articles of traffic, which the ships of Solomon brought from Ophir; nor in any other notice of Hebrew commerce. Yet it is not at all improbable, that individuals were sometimes concerned in the slave-trade of other nations. In some instances the number may have been great, when an opportunity was afforded of making large gains, by buying the captives which were offered for sale, by tens of thousands, as after the conquest of a populous city, like Sidon, by Artaxerxes Ochus, or Tyre, by Alexander the Great.



The neighboring powers of Tyre and Sidon, at one period, had sold many of the Hebrews to the Greeks. From what is said of them in the Book of Joel, it is evident, that this traffic in men had been pursued in the most reckless and revolting manner. In the terrible retribution which was denounced, the avenging God of "the children of Judah" declared: "I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return recompense upon your own head. And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the Lord hath spoken it." (Ch. iii.)

The fulfillment of this prophecy is among the well authenticated memorials of the age of Alexander. Many of those who had been sold into Greece were set at liberty; while the Tyrians and Sidonians who had sold them, were doomed to slavery by the conquerors, and were purchased by some of the Jews, who sold them to the Sabeans and Arabians.

A part of those purchased, it is very likely, were sold to Jews, or were retained by the purchasers in their own families. In the three centuries following the age of Alexander, there was no diminution of the slave-holding spirit among the Gentiles, either of Asia, Europe or Africa. And we are not able to affirm, that, at any time previous to the Christian era, the Jews had no slaves among them. But the manner in which the slave-merchants are alluded to, who came with the armies of Syria in the wars of the Maccabees, very plainly shows how such a commerce, as that in men, was regarded by those noble champions of Hebrew liberty. (1 Mac. iii. 41, &c.; 2 Mac. viii. 10, 11, 34-36.) And such, in general, was the public sentiment, or the various influence of divers causes, that, when the Messiah appeared, there is much reason for the opinion, that both polygamy and slavery had so far been abolished, as not to require any specific notice in his admonitory and reformative instructions.

In the judgment of biblical scholars, who are among the best qualified to determine the point, it is very questionable, if, "in the days of his flesh," the eye of the Great Reformer ever rested upon a single slave. And one case only, that of the young servant of a Roman centurion, who, at Capernaum, exhibited "so great faith," can be cited as an example, that the relation of master and slave was ever brought directly before him, in any of his ministrations. But it is far from being certain, that the servant in question was a *bond-servant*. The terms used in each of the narratives of the miracle of healing, which, in the circumstances, was so memorable, might as we think, have been employed as they are, even by a Roman, if that servant had been as free as was the centurion himself.

The compassionate interposition of the Saviour was besought as earnestly, as if he were no less dear to his master than an own son. (Mat. viii. 8 ; Luke vii. 2-10.)

In all the recorded discourses and conversations of our Lord, there are but a very few instances, in which any allusion whatever was made to the subject of servitude. And in no one of these is the idea of *slavery*, as we use the term, necessarily or strongly implied. (Mat. vi. 24 ; Comp. Luke xvi. 13 ; Mat. xiii. 27, 28 ; John viii. 33 ; xiii. 15 ; xv. 20.) However the fact may be explained, there is not, in either of the Gospels, any affirmation of right or condemnation of wrong, in respect to master or slave,—any more than there is of direct rebuke of idolaters and their abominable iniquities.

The Great Teacher said nothing of the gladiatorial exhibitions, so common and so bloody in the Roman empire, or of other customs and practices, which were, of course, utterly inconsistent with the well-being of society, and repugnant to every principle of the gospel. Even upon great questions of civil polity, which have since become so vastly interesting, throughout the civilized world, he delivered no discourse and gave no counsel, which could have any immediate tendency to disturb the submission of the Jews to the throne of Cæsar.

The accomplishment of the grand design of the Redeemer's coming into our world, did not admit of his directing the attention of his hearers or of his disciples, to those subjects, which would at once have given his mission the aspect of a treasonable conspiracy against the power of Rome, or, at least, of a lawless and fanatical movement, for the destruction of existing social relations. Enough for the hour, at that momentous crisis in the history of our redemption, that the Lord of life should publish a system of grace and truth, involving principles, which, in their intended and inevitable result, so far as applied, would be subversive of every institution or custom, which is at variance with the highest virtue and glory of man. Such a system the gospel claims to be, in all its elements and in all its characteristics. And if it be "diametrically opposed to the *principle* of slavery," as is maintained by an eminent expounder of Christian ethics, and by many others, then is it undeniable, as he also maintains, that "it must be opposed to the *practice* of slavery ; and therefore, were the principles of the gospel fully adopted, slavery could not exist."\*

"*The very reason*," it has elsewhere been said by the same author,—“why this mode of teaching was adopted, *was to accomplish the universal abolition of slavery*. A precept could not have done this ; for, in the changing condition of human

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\* Wayland's Elements of Moral Science.

society, the means would have easily been devised for eluding it. But by teaching truths, the very truths in which Christianity consisted, utterly and absolutely opposed to slavery, truths founded in the essential moral relations of creatures to their Creator, it was rendered certain that wherever Christianity was understood and obeyed, this institution must cease to exist."\*

And we may add to these statements, without anticipating what we have to say in the sequel,—that the method of Christ and the apostles in regard to slavery, is precisely that which the ablest apologists† for the right or lawfulness of slave-holding have described, and declared to be, the only consistent method for Christians at the present day. And they admit the fact, as indisputable, that the gospel, by its legitimate operation, *did* abolish the slavery of the Roman empire.

It is indeed in precepts or commandments, that we have the literal rule of duty. But it is in the principles, upon which those precepts are founded, and in the doctrines and examples which reveal or illustrate the nature of our obligations, and the proper motives of cordial obedience, that we have the highest, the most ennobling, and the most effectual instructions of Christian virtue. Without these, in a distinct perception and recognition, the precepts of our holy religion would never find a response of love in the heart. Without these, also, it would be impossible to feel the admiring and adoring sentiment of the Psalmist, when he exclaimed: "I have seen an end of all perfection; but THY COMMANDMENT IS EXCEEDING BROAD!"

Our duty, then, to God and to one another, we do not seek to learn, preëminently, in the precepts, but in the great and primary principles and doctrines of "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." And in proportion as these are apprehended and exert their legitimate influence, the gospel will have its "free course," and be glorified, as a "perfect law of liberty."

Every good citizen obeys the laws of his country, not because of their "terror," but because of his sentiments and convictions of uprightness and order. And the sincere Christian, who in his outward life reflects most of the "image of God, in righteousness and true holiness," is influenced, and transformed into that image, immeasurably more by his filial acquaintance with God in Christ, than by any of the most fearful denunciations of "eternal judgment."

Hence, as we understand our relations to the Judge of all the earth, we should be guilty of a most flagrant error, if we were not to recognize the cardinal principles and doctrines of Christianity, as the clearest and surest exponents of his sovereign

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\* Wayland's Letters to Fuller.

† Fuller's Letters to Wayland.

will, in the more specific directions of precept or commandment. Thus if we would know what interpretation we are to give to the GOLDEN RULE, it will not suffice to consider the literal form of the words only, in which it comes to us. If we would comprehend its beneficence and its justice, in its thousand different applications, we must remember those many other "gracious words," which are like the parable of the "Good Samaritan" in answering the question—"Who is my neighbor?" And if, upon the subject now before us, we would know and judge rightly the witness of the "Revelation of Jesus Christ" in the New Testament, we must open our whole heart to the radiance of the TRUTH, which makes us "free indeed." According to the gospel, all mankind are placed upon the same level before God. Jew and Gentile, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, are all one in Christ. All were redeemed by the same blood. All have the same title to become "heirs of salvation." All *should* be, in deed and in truth, *brethren beloved*. How, then, could any man, with "the love of Christ constraining" him, ever make a slave of his fellow-man? And in what land does slavery exist, without assuming, that there is a distinction and a difference between the slave and his master, which is radically and irreconcilably opposed to the very first principles, both of evangelical and civil liberty, equality and fraternity? How can any man believe, that he himself as a slave-holder and a Christian, would be willing to be deprived of his liberty; to be retained in servitude; to be bought and sold at pleasure,—for the same reasons and upon the same principles that he holds his own slaves in bondage?

"Domestic slavery," says Dr. Wayland, "proceeds upon the principle, that the master has a right to control the actions, physical and intellectual, of the slave, for his own, that is, the master's, individual benefit; and of course, that the happiness of the master, when it comes in competition with the happiness of the slave, extinguishes in the latter the right to pursue it. It supposes, at best, that the relation between master and slave is not that which exists between man and man, but is a modification of that which exists between man and the brutes. Now this manifestly supposes, that two classes of beings are created with dissimilar rights; that the master possesses rights which have never been conceded by the slave; and, that the slave has no rights at all over the means of happiness which God has given him, whenever these means of happiness can be rendered available to the service of the master. It supposes that the Creator intended one human being to govern the physical, intellectual and moral actions, of as many other human beings, as by purchase he can bring within his physical power; and that one human being may thus acquire a right to sacrifice the hap-



piness of any number of other human beings for the purpose of promoting his own."

This general statement of "the principle of slavery," we are aware, would not be received by those, who contend that slavery like despotism is to be regarded as in itself among the things which are indifferent, and which are right or wrong only according to circumstances. But it is much easier to deny the statement, than to disprove it.—And let any man, if he can, refer us to any *better* "principle of slavery."

It is not for the slave-holder to assume, that vested or legal rights are superior to those which belong to the slave, *as a man*, and which have been forfeited by no crime. It is not for the slave-holder to say, that other men would do as he does, in like circumstances. Neither is it to the purpose to allege, that, if the slave could change his place for that of his master, he would be a slave-holder. The question is, *What is right before God?* The criterion of duty to our fellow-man, is not what *we* do, or what others would do; but what *we* and they *ought* to do.

If the slave-holder shall affirm, that his slave is *inferior* to himself, and therefore he has a right to hold him in servitude,—the argument would prove infinitely too much; whatever be the kind of inferiority, which might be intended or conceded. Is it not a dictate of the Golden Rule, that, if we have any advantage over our fellow-men, in intellect, in knowledge, in station, in wealth, it is our duty "to do good and to communicate" the more,—enlightening, improving, elevating those who are of the same great family, instead of subjugating them, oppressing them, and degrading if not destroying them?—And if existing laws in the slave-holding States are incompatible with the intellectual advancement, and the general progress of the slaves, according to their ability, in those varied attainments, which exalt man in the scale of being, and enable him the more eminently to glorify God,—can those laws be consistent with the gospel? Can the system, which imperatively requires them for its very existence, be otherwise than antagonistical to the "love which is of God," and with which "we ought to love one another?" So far as the gospel can be said to have *legislated* for man, is it not for *all* men?—Were its precepts or injunctions *for* the slave-holder, and against the slave; so that it is the *right* of the former to act for the latter, as if the latter were first of all amenable to the will of the former?

The advocates of slavery have much to say of *the right of the master to oblige the slave* to submit to his commands. Why is it that so little has been said of the *obligation of the slave*, whether natural or moral, to be his master's property and to be used or sold like a brute or chattel? What right *can* the mas-

ter have to his slave, which is not immeasurably below the highest and most sacred of all natural rights,—*the right of man to himself*, in the fear of God?

As we understand the claims of right to *oblige* the slave to submit to his master, in all things; and as the laws which uphold these claims must certainly mean, if they mean any thing; it would be as impossible for many of the slaves to serve God, according to his Word, and serve their masters, as their masters require of them, as it would be for a man to be an exemplary Christian, while he daily worshipped a graven image of Bramha or Moloch.

When the commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself," it is implied, that man's love of himself must be, not only in accordance with supreme love to God, but also promotive of this love in himself and others. He is not to make his own selfish and unholy passions and predilections the criterion or measure of his duty of love to his neighbor. The "love" which is "the fulfilling of the law," "worketh no ill to his neighbor," any more than to himself. And he must love himself and be inclined to do for himself, and for all others, according to his relations and obligations, as a subject of the moral and paternal government of God. He must, therefore, regard all men as members of the same family; as subjects of the same moral government; as having the same essential wants, intellectual and spiritual as well as physical and social; as recognized alike in the rich provisions of divine bounty and grace: and thus holding such a relation, each one to every other, that all should seek to do good and not evil to every one, whatever his country, his color, or his condition.

Can it be doubted, that every man is bound to have that kind of regard for himself, and that only, which will best enable him to answer the great end for which God made him a "living soul"? No man's personal happiness is any more important to himself, than is that of any other man to *himself*. Where, then, in the law of love to God and man, as expounded by the Great Teacher of the world,—where in any of his words of doctrine, and of instruction in righteousness,—is there to be discerned the "shadow of a shade" of sanction for the claim of right, to hold a fellow-man, though a brother in Christ, in bondage; and, for neither his debt nor his crime, to compel him to be a slave, by what ever means affecting his physical, social, intellectual and moral nature, his entire submission to his master's will is to be secured? Let the law of love be fulfilled, in all its length and breadth, and the doom of slavery would be sealed in a day.

"The Christian religion," it has been said by one of its most respected living witnesses, "teaches that 'God hath made of

one blood all the nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,' (Acts xvii. 26.) and that as children of the common Father they are regarded as equal. All the right which one human being has ever been supposed to have over another, in virtue of any superiority in rank, complexion, or blood, is evidently contrary to this doctrine of the Bible, in regard to the origin and equality of the human race. \* \* A man may be wiser or less wise than I am ; he may have more or less property ; he may have a more richly endowed, or an inferior mental capacity ; but this does not affect our common nature. He is in every respect, notwithstanding our difference in these things, as completely a human being as myself ; and he stands in precisely the same relations towards the Creator as Father of all. \* \* \* It is his right and privilege to seek to know the will of God, and to act always with reference to the future state on which he is soon to enter. \* \* \* It was with reference to this *common nature*, that redemption was provided. \* \* \* Every human being has a right to feel, that, when the Son of God became incarnate, he took *his* nature upon him, and to regard him as the representative of that common humanity. It is on the basis of that common nature, that the gospel is commanded to be preached to 'every creature,' and any one human being has a right to consider that gospel as addressed to him, with as specific an intention, as any other human being whatever. It is on the basis of that common nature, also, that the Holy Spirit is sent down from heaven to awaken, convict, and convert the soul ; and any human being, no matter what his complexion, may regard the promise of the Holy Spirit to be as much addressed to him as to any other one—though that other one may have a more comely form or complexion ; may be clothed in the imperial purple, or may wear a coronet, or a crown. In *all* respects pertaining to our common origin ; to our nature as distinct from the brute creation ; to the fall and to redemption, to the rights of conscience and to the hopes of glory, the human race is regarded in the Bible as on a level. There is an entire system of things, which contemplates *man as such*, as distinguished from the inferior creation ; not one of which pertains to a brute, however the brute may seem to approximate a human being, and each one of which is as applicable to one human being as to another."

"If these views are correct, then all the reliance which the system of slavery has ever been thought to derive from the supposed fact, that one class of human beings is essentially inferior to another, is a false reliance. At all events, such views will find no support in the Bible, and they must be left to be maintained by those, who recognize the Christian Scriptures as of no authority. A man acting on the views laid down in the



Bible on this subject, would never *make* a slave ; a man acting on these views would not long *retain* a slave ; and Christianity, by laying down the doctrine of the essential equality of the race, has stated a doctrine which *must* sooner or later emancipate every human being from bondage.”\*

One of the most graphic and thrilling of all the prophetic descriptions of the Messiah’s spiritual reign upon the earth, is that in which he speaks in his own person, as “anointed to preach good tidings unto the meek ;” and as “sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” If we do not greatly mistake, we have here a foreshadowing of the gospel, as the means of universal freedom, and, of course, universal emancipation. And every one will remember how at Nazareth, the whole of the prediction was read from “the book of the prophet,” and with what unutterable earnestness “the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him,” who “began to say to them, this day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

In the last words of the passage as he read it, namely—“*the acceptable year of the Lord*”—there is an allusion most clearly to “the year of jubilee,” that “fiftieth year,” which the people of God were to “hallow,” and in which “liberty” was to be “proclaimed throughout all the land.” The same word for “liberty” is used in the words of Isaiah, or rather of the Messiah himself, as in the statute for the year of jubilee. In Jeremiah also (xxxiv. 8, 9.) the same is used to signify the emancipation of slaves ; referring to those Hebrews, who were held by their brethren in servitude.

In the times of the prophets, and in the days of Christ and the apostles, the idea of slavery was scarcely separable from that of captivity. The Hebrews excepted, it was the universal custom, as we have before stated, to make slaves of captives in war. And without war and piracy, the demand for bond-servants could never have been supplied. Immense numbers of these were enslaved captives.

If, moreover, instead of the single word “captives,” in “the book of the prophet,” we should read “*enslaved* captives,”—what prophecy can be named which has had a more unquestionable or remarkable fulfillment,—since the Messiah “ascended up where he was before”? Such was the spirit of the gospel in the hearts of some of the early Christians and elders of the church,—that some of them expended large estates, to redeem captives.—Thus “Cyprian sent to the bishop of Numidia, in order to redeem some captives, 2,500 crowns. Socra-

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\* Barnes, pp. 344-6.



tes, the historian, says, that after the Romans had taken 7,000 Persian captives, Acacius, bishop of Amida, melted the gold and silver plate of his church, with which he redeemed the captives. Ambrose of Milan did the same with the furniture of his church. It was the only case in which the imperial constitutions allowed the plate to be sold." (Bib. Rep. Oct. 1835. p. 433.) There were instances, also, in which some of high standing and influence, not only sold their property, but themselves, for the same purpose of delivering captives from bondage.

To what but the influence of the gospel of the Prince of Peace, can we attribute the abrogation and entire abandonment of the custom of enslaving captives in war, among the nations of Europe, during the Middle Ages, and after those hordes of barbarians from Asia had become converts to the faith of Him "who came not to destroy men's lives but to save them"? Are not all Christian nations at this day the witnesses, that the gospel of the Son of God has been marvellously glorified, as a proclamation of "deliverance to the captives"?

The early Christians manifested the same noble spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice, for the deliverance of all that were in the bonds of slavery. Was it not because the spirit of Christ was in them? And had it not been for the same spirit, would New England have become what it now is, in regard to freedom? Or would Great Britain have the glory of the West India emancipation?

From this view of the facts of history, at the time the prophecy in the book of Isaiah was uttered,—at the time also of its being read as it was, in the synagogue of Nazareth,—and in the ages which followed,—we cannot hesitate to consider the idea of servitude as so included in that of captivity, that all who are in unrighteous bonds, may justly claim to have been remembered in that prophetic proclamation of "the acceptable year of the Lord." So palpably inconsistent are the precepts and doctrines of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God," so totally irreconcilable, with the *principle* of slavery,—that it would have been strange indeed, if it had not been heralded in prophecy, as the harbinger and the means of universal emancipation.

If it were not for the gospel, we might despair of the cause of freedom, political or personal. We should have no such bow of promise, as now greets our vision.

He who so preached "as one having authority," "knew what was in man." With him "a thousand years were as one day." What was to be attempted or accomplished immediately, and what was left to "the fullness of time" in the future, when his "way should be prepared," could have been no secret.

Even to his disciples, who had been so long under his immediate instructions, he was obliged to say :—"I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth ; and he will show you things to come." How much more, then, would others have need of gradual illumination, in order that they might be prepared to acknowledge every just right of their fellow-men, cease from all wrongs, and redress all grievances ?

By diffusing the gospel in its leading principles and precepts, among all classes of people, a quiet and bloodless revolution might be accomplished, in regard to slavery, to war, to despotism, and to all other gigantic forms of evil, in the social and civil relations of mankind. But, as it has been justly said, "if it had forbidden the *evil*, instead of subverting the *principle* ; if it had proclaimed the unlawfulness of slavery and taught slaves to *resist* the oppression of their masters ; it would instantly have arrayed the two parties in deadly hostility, throughout the civilized world ; its announcement would have been the signal of servile war ; and the very name of the Christian religion would have been forgotten amidst the agitations of bloodshed. The fact, that under these circumstances, the gospel does not forbid slavery, affords no reason to suppose, that it does not mean to prohibit it ; much less does it afford ground for belief, that Jesus Christ intended to *authorize it*." \*

"The gospel is a universal rule. It prescribes no moral duty for one man, and excuses from that duty another, when both are under the same circumstances. If it prescribed the duty of manumitting their slaves to *Christian* masters, it must have prescribed it to *all masters* ; that is, it must have adopted that other mode of teaching by *precept*, instead of teaching by *principle*. It therefore left the whole matter to the operation of principle. In all this may be seen the benevolence and long-mindedness of the Deity. God treats his intelligent creatures according to the nature which he has given them. He reveals his will. He promulgates truth of universal efficacy, but frequently allows long time to elapse, before the effect of it appears, in order that the effect may be the more radical and comprehensive." †

The apostles were all freemen. They could have said with no unsuitable exultation, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." And imperfectly as they may have comprehended their Master's will, when they received their final charge, on the Mount of Olives, how can it be supposed, that they went forth to preach, as the gospel, a system

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\* Wayland.

† Letters to Dr. Fuller.

of doctrines and duties, that would sanction the slavery which they found in Asia, Greece and Rome, or the slavery which now exists in the United States? And did Paul, who was afterwards added to their number, and to whom the rights of Roman freedom were so dear,—ever preach or indite a single sentence, which was meant to be understood as an approval or justification, either of ancient or modern slave-holding?

For our answer to questions like these, we are happy to have been so anticipated by the lofty and indignant protestation of one, who, “though dead,” will long continue to “speak.”

“Had Napoleon, on capturing Berlin or Vienna, doomed most or the whole of their inhabitants to bondage; had he seized on venerable matrons, the mothers of illustrious men, who were reposing, after virtuous lives, in the bosom of grateful families; had he seized on the delicate, refined, beautiful young woman, whose education had prepared her to grace the sphere in which God had placed her, and over all whose prospects the freshest hopes and most glowing imaginations of early life were breathed; had he seized on the minister of religion, the man of science, the man of genius, the sage, the guides of the world; had he scattered these through the slave-markets of the world, and transferred them to the highest bidders at public auction, the men to be converted into instruments of slavish toil, the women into instruments of lust, and both to endure whatever indignities and tortures absolute power can inflict, we should then have had a picture, in the present age, of slavery as it existed in the time of Paul. Such slavery, we are told, was sanctioned by the apostle! Such, we are told, he pronounced to be morally right! Had Napoleon sent some cargoes of these victims to these shores, we might have bought them, and degraded the noblest beings to our lowest uses, and might have cited Paul to testify to our innocence! Were an infidel to bring this charge against the apostle, we should say that he was laboring in his vocation; but that a professed Christian should so insult this sainted philanthropist, this martyr to truth and benevolence, is a sad proof of the power of slavery to blind its supporters to the plainest truth.” \*

To all this we respond our most hearty assent. A reply has been attempted with an ability and spirit worthy of a better cause and a more honorable purpose.† But in vain will any man, be his nominal or real “vocation” what it may,—or whether an apologist of slavery or an apologist *for* its apologists, in vain will he “labor” to vindicate the lawfulness of slave-holding, by the instructions and conduct of the great apostle to the Gentiles.

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\* Channing's Works, vol. II.

† Biblical Repertory.



Wherever Paul went, in countries out of Judea, he must have found a population in which the slaves generally outnumbered the freemen. This was certainly true in the large cities. The same gospel was preached to Jew and Greek, to bond and free. As both of the latter classes, as well as the former, were among the hearers, we can imagine no reason why some slave-holders should not have been found among the converts. We cannot doubt that there were "believing masters," whom converted slaves regarded as their own "brethren," in the bonds of a common service to a common Lord and Master. (1 Tim. vi. 2; Eph. vi. 9; Col. iv. 1; Philemon.)

The evidence is to our minds perfectly conclusive, that some of the members of the churches gathered by Paul and his associates, were admitted to the fellowship of kindred in Christ, without being required to emancipate their slaves, as a proof of their conversion and a condition of church-membership. There may have been much of private counsel, and much may have been done, or have been expected to be done, for the advantage, if not the manumission of bond-servants, concerning which there is neither record nor allusion. Instruction of which we have heard nothing was unquestionably given in regard to other subjects, as, for example, the observance of the Lord's day, instead of the seventh day.

But let it be admitted that the relation of master and slave, in respect to natural right or moral principle, was not at any time made a subject of public discourse or of private counsel. Could not the apostles have done all, which is known, while yet neither approving nor countenancing the system or the principle of slavery? If they could not,—where is "the man of God" now living, who is not chargeable with duplicity, dishonesty and hypocrisy,—while endeavoring to be "made all things to all men,—that" he "might by all means save some?"

Masters and servants, being members together of the same spiritual body, met at the place of worship and at the table of the Lord especially, as upon the same level. They were taught by the Scriptures, by word of mouth, and by Epistles, the same confession of faith, and the same rules of "newness of life." Whatever related to the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, included servants as well as masters. But how could servants discharge those duties, unless their masters were to treat them, not as when all were together in bondage to "the god of this world," but as men who had become the Lord's freemen; and who, although not formally released from the state of servitude, in which they were "called" to the 'liberty of children of God,' yet found themselves in a most enviable condition, as compared with others, and with themselves also, previous to the conversion of their masters?



That such was really the change of condition in many instances, if not invariably, and that servants were to be, and were regarded as "above servants" and as "brethren beloved" by such masters as Philemon, is a natural conclusion from Paul's procedure in the case of Onesimus. The apostle would doubtless have exposed himself to the laws of the Roman empire, if he had acted as if harboring a runaway slave; and such we are willing to concede, this Onesimus was, although there is some ground for a question in the premises. But if Onesimus had not preferred to return to the house of Philemon, we know not how Paul could have "sent him" thither. Not unlikely it was his own proposal, and the aid of Paul may have been solicited to secure for him a favorable reception. There may have been circumstances and reasons in view of both, which do not at all appear in the statements or allusions of the Epistle, which has given occasion for such conflicting comments.

But who can read that Epistle, without seeing, if he will candidly examine it, that in every part the writer assumes, that Philemon is a Christian, who would gladly receive Onesimus, now himself converted, and regard him as a servant, *in name and form only*? Does not the whole spirit of it seem to take for granted, that Philemon is fully aware of the new mode of relation to Onesimus, which had sprung from their mutual bonds of fraternal love? When Paul said, "For perhaps he departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him forever," what hinders that we should perceive here a most beautiful, though indirect reference to their enduring relationship in the world to come? And when he adds, "Not now as a servant; but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord," how is it possible, that he could have the least idea that Onesimus was going back, to be treated otherwise than most kindly, as one of the family of Philemon, in whose house he may have been born, and also as one who had rights as a Christian, which would certainly ensure such an acknowledgment of his rights as a man, as might soon, if not immediately, lead to his discharge from servitude? There may be no sufficient historical ground for the tradition, that he received his freedom, and that he was afterwards a bishop of Beréa;—but the tradition has every probability in its favor. At a later period "when a slave became, with the consent of his master, a minister of the gospel, he was, by the very act, regarded as emancipated."

In any event, the conduct of Paul affords no sanction of *the principle* of slavery. Let all slave-holders feel and act towards their slaves, as Paul enjoined upon Philemon, or rather presumed, that of course, he would,—and the slave-holding system

would at once be transformed in all its features and constituent properties ; and, at no distant day, there would be such a jubilee of emancipation, as the world has never known.

It certainly was neither lawful nor expedient for Paul, or any of the apostles, to teach any such doctrine, as that slaves *ought not* to obey their masters ; and that if their masters would not set them free, they would be justified in running away. It would not only have aggravated the evils of slavery, in thousands of instances, but not a preacher of the gospel would have been suffered to go at large, with any such doctrine, if he was permitted by the civil authorities to live, any longer than the time necessary for his trial and condemnation. What would be the doom of any such preacher, at the present day, in any of the slave-holding States of the South ?

One of the natural consequences of the relation of equality and fraternity in the Lord, was the temptation of withholding that obedience and honor which servants had before rendered to their masters. And whether or not they had "believing masters," they might be so exalted in their own esteem, by the moral distinctions of their participation in the hopes and glories of the high calling of God, that they would not be inaccessible to insidious suggestions of their personal consequence ; nor slow to make manifest a spirit of discontent, or of rebelliousness, which would operate most unfavorably for the character and progress of the gospel. From such sources or some others, there undoubtedly was an urgent occasion for injunctions, like that in the 1st Epistle to Timothy : "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren ; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." (vi. 1, 2.)

In the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians, (vii. 20-24.) it is said : "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called being a servant ? care not for it ; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman ; likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price ; be not ye the servants of men. Brethren, let every man, wherein he was called, therein abide with God." Of the same import and for the same purpose are the other passages, in the Epistles, upon the same subject. (Col. iii. 22-25 ; Tit. ii. 9-10. Also 1st of Peter ii. 18-20.) And are we to consider such injunctions, as apostolical authority for slave-holding ?

When did Paul ever say, *Servants, obey your masters in*

*the Lord, for this is right?* And why did he not speak thus, as he did when inculcating filial obedience? If it was *right* in itself, and a moral duty according to "the law and the prophets," why did he not speak in the same manner, as to children?

The motive, in every instance, was *not that of obligation to the master, as if of right* a slave-holder; but that which arose from the relation of servants to the "Lord of all." They were to obey, that '*the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed,*' '*in singleness of heart, as unto Christ;*' '*that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*' How does the *principle* of obligation here differ, from that which should constrain us to "resist not evil," and to "pray for them which despitefully use" us "and persecute" us? When smitten on the right cheek, if we turn the other also, do we thereby confess ourselves justly smitten? We may suffer patiently, for the honor of God and the gospel, what we know to be the most flagrant injustice and inhuman oppression. And we may counsel others to suffer in like manner, if need be, "for conscience toward God."

It is at least somewhat remarkable, that if the master had a *right* to be a master, such as could be recognized, independently of the legal title which he held,—the slave should never have been exhorted by an appeal to such a right. But if there is any reference or allusion to *the right* of the master, as such, we have failed to discover it.

In all their instructions, from first to last, the apostles appear to have aimed to promote a thorough conversion of every man to righteousness and true holiness; as if such conversion would ultimately associate with its results, as consequence or accompaniment, all that was most needful in the existing circumstances of individuals and communities. Thus, while accounting freedom a great privilege, and a natural right indisputably, they could, in all godly sincerity and with the truest friendship for the slave, exhort him to make the greatest exertion to please his master, in every thing which his duty to God required or permitted; and not to be discontented, if he should be compelled to remain in servitude. If he could have freedom, let him embrace it, as a state most desirable. Yet to be a freeman in Christ was of vastly greater importance. And as his spiritual redemption had been already purchased at the price of the blood of the Son of God, let him consider himself exalted as a servant of God, and the "Lord's freeman," rather than depressed and humiliated by bondage to his fellow-man.

Such injunctions and exhortations were perfectly consistent with an inward abhorrence of the principle of slave-holding. And the same may be said of those addressed to the masters



themselves. They were required to discharge their duties to their servants, with as conscientious a regard for the will of God and the love of Christ, as servants were required to exercise towards them. "Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." (Eph. vi. 9.) And again the charge was, "Masters give unto your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." (Col. iv. 1.) This charge to those in the church of Colossé immediately follows the exhortation to servants, encouraging them to look for the reward of fidelity to their masters, in that inheritance which was theirs, as servants of the Lord Christ. "But he that doeth wrong," it is significantly declared, both for servants and masters,—"*shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and THERE IS NO RESPECT OF PERSONS.*"

Notice also the exhortation subjoined, which must be understood as addressed to all, but would seem to have been peculiarly intended to touch the sympathies of masters. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, *for which I am also in bonds*: that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time." The exceeding delicacy and tenderness of the allusion to the "bonds" in which the apostle himself was, because a faithful servant of Christ, is equalled only by the exquisite elegance and urbanity of the Epistle to Philemon. And surely no one of the servants in the church at Colossé could have had any question of the apostle's most cordial respect for them, as well as sympathizing interest in all their temporal privations and hardships. As they heard his Epistle read, they would hear him speak of Onesimus, as "a faithful and beloved brother," and one of themselves,—and see Onesimus also, face to face,—who had been sent in company with Tychicus, that "he might know their estate and comfort their hearts." They would have been most unreasonable to have expected more from him, however intolerable might have been their servitude.

There is a consideration, also, which we deem worthy of no small account, in estimating the desirableness of freedom to the slave. It should be remembered, that much commotion had been already made by the news of the gospel; and many thought that the "doctrine according to godliness" must be resisted and crushed, or it would "turn the world upside down." Dreadful persecutions had already been experienced, and there was an evident expectation, that more "perilous times" (2 Tim. iii. 1.) were about to come. If such was the



"distress" then "present," that the apostle advised all, who were unmarried, not to marry, if they would have the less of "trouble in the flesh;" if such were the uncertainties of all earthly things, that it "remained, that both they that had wives," should "be as though they had none, and they that rejoiced, as though they rejoiced not, and they that bought, as though they possessed not;"—is it improbable, that from the whole aspect of the "fashion of the world" as then before him and as "passing away," he could not but feel, that the question of personal freedom was of comparatively little moment to any one, in whom CHRIST had been formed "the hope of glory?" Vastly different are the circumstances of slaves at the present day! And even in the primitive churches, freedom soon came to be esteemed an invaluable privilege. Emancipation was frequently solemnized in the church with very impressive ceremonies.

In times of persecution the *slave* would obviously be less exposed to die as a martyr by popular violence, or in the regular course of law. The master would be the victim, in preference. And to both masters and slaves, who had hope in Christ, how animating must have been those sublime views of "the liberty of the children of God," when they have left the body, and when the "redemption of the body shall be consummated at the resurrection of the just!" (Rom. viii. ; 1 Cor. xv.)

But suppose, that it was a hard struggle for the slave, to remain quietly and contentedly, if he saw no prospect of being free from his master, until the grave was opened to receive his mortal nature. With all that he may have had to endure and all that he may have needed of the graces of meekness and patience,—we are not sure, that "the believing master" did not have the bitterest experience, and did not need the largest measure of the virtues of "the new man," that he might do the will of God. The natural rights of the slave being fully admitted, there would yet be questions, upon which "the flesh" and "the spirit" would have not a little of sharp contention. Were not men in those circumstances, to be instructed, and "besought, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ?"

Although not a word may have been spoken upon the *rights* of the master or the *wrongs* of the servant, it must not be forgotten, that Paul has classified "*men-stealers*," with the most abandoned and abominable of the workers of iniquity, and enemies of all righteousness. (1 Tim. i. 10.) The moral distance was not so great between the kidnapper and the *slave-dealer*, that both of them alike may not have been denoted by the term, which he employed. Neither was the distance so great, certainly in many cases, between the *slave-dealer* and the *slave-holder*, as not unnaturally to occasion in Christian

masters some very anxious "searchings of heart." What would have been the effect of any other treatment, than that which they received from their spiritual fathers and instructors? What if Paul had not been "gentle among" them, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children?" How could they, unmoved, receive injunctions to "give unto their servants that which is just and equal," while so solemnly reminded of the judgment-seat of Christ, with whom "is no respect of persons," and so affectionately solicited to pray for the opening of a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ for which also the apostle was in those "bonds," and wearing that "chain?" How could they meet their servants upon the basis of equality as freemen and brethren in the Lord; how co-operate in seeking the salvation of others, as well as promoting their own, and endeavor, in unity of faith to fulfill their mutual responsibilities of love to God and love to man;—and yet never have a thought of the inevitable tendency of such a relationship and fellowship to "break every yoke" but "the yoke" of Christ? As they became more and more "enlightened" in the "eyes" of their "understanding," how could they fail to see that they were not "giving that which is just and equal," unless they gave their servants their freedom, at an early day; or retained them, regarding them as if "hired servants," and having no wish or purpose to uphold and perpetuate an institution, so contrary to the natural and the moral rights of every human being?

That the effects of the gospel were most happy, in ameliorating the condition of slaves, in different countries, where the holy influence of its principles was permitted silently to operate, is amply proved in what remains to us of the history of the primitive churches. Much was to be done, a labor of years and of generations was to be accomplished,—before the right of slave-holding, which was so taken for granted among all heathen nations, could be openly resisted, and the institution of slavery, in its principle, be assailed, with the least hope of success. And it is not easy for any one to estimate the magnitude, the immensity of the work, which Christianity had to perform, before idolatry could be extirpated, and slavery abolished, in the civilized world. Both the one and the other bowed before it. And the glory of the moral triumph, uncounted millions of "sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty" will celebrate, through everlasting ages.

It could have been no time-serving policy, no fear of personal consequences, that could have had influence upon Paul, in treating as he did, the trying subject of slavery. He did what was expedient, according to the "wisdom that is from above," which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and with-

out hypocrisy ;" not that which "is earthly, sensual, devilish," with "envying and strife, confusion and every evil work." He "went about doing good," and followed in close proximity the steps of his adorable Leader "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth."

And if there is to be any impeachment of his integrity and honesty, on the ground that he ought to have done far otherwise, than he did, if really opposed to the principle of slaveholding, as in utter conflict with the principles of the gospel ;—then it would, perhaps, be not inappropriate to inquire, how such impeachment could be issued, without a direct imputation upon the veracity and holiness of "God only wise,"—in the method and means, which have distinguished the whole course of his providence and grace.

"In trust with the gospel," the apostle was accustomed to "speak, not as pleasing men, but God ;" "neither at any time used flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness ; nor of men sought glory." If there ever was a man, who is entitled to everlasting remembrance and gratitude for his noble deeds, when in the fear of God, a fearless champion of human rights and liberties,—that man was Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. And to interpret his words, or his example, as authority for the right of slaveholding, is, as we must be allowed to say, a libel upon his memory, of which no one would intentionally be guilty, unless willing also to despise and blaspheme the gospel and the name of "the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ."

Far be it from us to "bring railing accusation." We would "deal kindly" while we "deal truly" with all, who have the immediate responsibility of action, by means and measures for the removal of slavery from this land. We would not forget the example of the founders of the churches of Christ among the slave-holding Gentiles. Neither can we forget, that the circumstances in which those churches were established, were very different from those in which Christian churches now exist in our Southern States. Most sincerely do we believe, that, if all Christians in these States were to "do with their might" what they can find to be done,—the love of Christ constraining them ;—if they would detach themselves from all personal connection with the system of slavery, so that their influence should not "throw the sacred shield of religion over so great an evil, there is no public sentiment in this land—there could be none created, that would resist the power of such testimony. There is no power *out* of the church, that could sustain slavery an hour, if it were not sustained *in* it. Not a blow need be struck. Not an unkind word need be uttered. No man's motive need be impugned ; no man's proper rights invaded. All



that is needful is, for each Christian man, and for every Christian church, to stand up in the sacred majesty of such a solemn testimony; to free themselves from all connection with the evil, and utter a calm and deliberate voice to the world, AND THE WORK WILL BE DONE."\*

Christianity demands the use of every available means for the intellectual and moral improvement of all orders and classes of men. It enforces a most sacred respect for the purity of woman, the rights and duties and privileges of husband and wife, parent and child. It can sanction no laws, usages or expedients, designed to keep men in ignorance or degradation, of any kind or degree. How then can any Christian desire the continuance of the slave-holding system in our country? How can any speak in its defence, or publish apologies in its behalf,—the whole tendency of which is to prolong, if not to perpetuate the evils and abominations, which will never cease, while the system is sustained, and which Christianity can no more cherish, than it can sanctify adultery and murder?

The Bible is for the slave, no less than for the master. Every word of God is to the slave as a man, as much as to any other man living. And after all that could be said of the opportunities afforded to learn the great truths of the Holy Scriptures, it is most certain, that *there are obligations implied in the doctrines and precepts of the gospel, which it is impossible for slaves to fulfill.*

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We cannot pursue this investigation, consistently with the limits to which we may be expected to confine ourselves. It would be too much to anticipate the entire acquiescence of the more than five hundred members of this Convention of Congregational Ministers in every sentiment or form of expression; but we shall be much disappointed, if the premises upon which we confidently rest our conclusions do not receive a response from this body, which will give to this part of our Report the moral power of their unanimous concurrence and their cordial approbation.

Such views of the Scriptures, together with an ardent love of liberty, have tended, from an early period in the history of the American people, to concentrate the thoughts and the efforts of enlightened and conscientious men, and, indeed, of whole communities in the free States, in opposition to slavery.

A brief account of what has been done under these influences for the extinction of slavery, not only in our own land,

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\* Barnes.



but in other parts of the world—together with some suggestions in regard to methods of producing increased efforts in favor of universal emancipation, forms a part of the analysis of our subject.

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In February, 1638, there came to Massachusetts from Tortugas, "a cargo of cotton, tobacco, salt *and negroes*." How many of these last there were, is not known. Neither have we found any record of the feelings, which were expressed in regard to them; although there can be no doubt, that they were brought as slaves.\* But in the Body of Laws adopted by the General Court of Massachusetts, in 1641, it is declared, that "there shall never be any bond slaverie, villinage, or captivitie amongst us, unless it be lawfull captives taken in just warres, and such strangers as willingly selle themselves or are sold to us. And these shall have all the liberties and Christian usages which the law of God established in Israell concerning such persons doeth morally require. This exempts none from servitude, who shall be judged thereto by authoritie."

They are familiar facts—that when Thomas Keyson, (or, Kezar,) and James Smith imported a number of slaves into Massachusetts, in 1645, the citizens of Boston denounced them and all others engaged in the same traffic as "malefactors and murderers;" committed them to prison;—bore public testimony against "the heinous crime of man-stealing;"—and ordered the negroes to be restored at the public charge to their native country,—the General Court at the same time, by letter, expressing their indignation at their wrongs; also, that, in 1652, the General Court of Rhode Island passed a well-considered law to this effect,—"That no black mankind or white being, shall be forced by covenant, bond, or otherwise, to serve any man, or his assigns longer than ten years"—and that the man that will not let them go free, or shall sell them away elsewhere, to the end that they may be enslaved to others a longer time, he or they shall forfeit to the Colony forty pounds." And equally familiar is the melancholy fact, that these honorable movements of the Fathers of New England, two centuries ago, were thwarted and overruled by the covetousness and despotic authority of the mother country. Their wise enactments were set aside, and their consciences and rights subjected to the capricious will of an unjust foreign government.

The spirit that claims for the African, as well as the European, the inalienable right of personal liberty, however it

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\* Collections of the American Statistical Association, Vol. I. p. 200.

may at times have been smothered by intrigue or overpowered by force, has never slumbered in New England. Enlightened and philanthropic minds have ever been awake and active. Ralph Sandiford, in 1729, and Benjamin Lay, in 1737, and how many others at earlier and later periods we know not, wrote and published facts on North American slavery which awakened intense feeling, and prepared the public mind for efficient action, whenever the independence of the colonies should present the opportunity. Still, it must be confessed, that the subject was then but imperfectly understood in its great moral bearings; and that not a few, while cherishing the philanthropic spirit of the gospel, were so far under the influence of temporary delusion, that they bought and sold their servants, with scarcely more consciousness of wrong-doing, than when they held an apprentice on the strength of legal indentures. Devout men felt little scruple to do what Abraham and David and Philemon were believed to have done, and what the Holy Spirit was thought to have sanctioned. Yet they commiserated the slave, and spared no pains to raise him to an intellectual and spiritual elevation like their own.

But in 1774, when the day of our Independence began to dawn, the Legislatures of Rhode Island and Connecticut prohibited the *importation* of slaves within their respective bounds. Massachusetts abolished slavery within her limits in 1780, and embodied the act of abolition in the Bill of Rights prefixed to her constitution. New Hampshire and Vermont followed her example—the one in 1792 and the other in 1793—both providing constitutionally, for immediate abolition. Pennsylvania passed laws in 1780, for the gradual extinction of the system. Connecticut and Rhode Island did the same in 1784; New York in 1799, and 1817; and New Jersey in 1804. Maine, as an independent State, has never been contaminated with the evil. Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa, through the ordinance of 1787, have been spared its withering curse.

During the past seventy years, the subject has been freely and ably discussed in the free States by theologians, such as Hopkins, Edwards, Channing, Wayland and Barnes; by able men also of other learned professions and by the people generally, in all its moral bearings, as well as its influence on the weal of the country and the destiny of the African. Neither its social, political, economical, nor religious aspects have been disregarded. Revelation and reason, history and philosophy, wit and common sense, legislation and associated action, have all been employed to enlighten the public mind, purify the popular sentiment, and direct the combined energies of the community to the early and complete annihilation of the mammoth

evil. And that its annihilation has not yet been effected, is less to be ascribed to any inherent defect in the conduct of these discussions, than to strong prejudices in favor of a time-honored iniquity, imbedded in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. Still, infirmity is inseparable from humanity in its present condition. From this infirmity flow misapprehensions of fact, mistakes of judgment, and errors in feeling and action. No man may claim infallibility for his opinions or movements, till he can claim exemption from the unhappy liabilities of our common nature. And allowing that whatever has been done to remove from us the curse of slavery, has been done with the purest regard to the good of man and the glory of God, it by no means follows, that all things have been done in perfect wisdom. The peculiar circumstances of the slave-holder which would tend to mitigate undue severity of judgment in his case may not at all times have been sufficiently considered; and we are quite sure, that the peculiar circumstances of the slave, demanding the interposition of Christian benevolence in his behalf, have been too coldly regarded. Such as God has made man, physically, intellectually and morally, so does God deal with him, and so should he be dealt with by his fellow-men. He has not made him a machine, to be driven by the force of wind or steam, nor a brute to be urged on by the goad or the spear, nor a slave to go and come at a master's bidding, nor like Issachar to crouch down between two burdens; but he has made him in his own image, and thereby rendered any assault on his personal rights a crime. To secure him against this, it should be enough to know that he is a MAN—the embodiment of whatever of intellectual or moral worth, God has seen fit to pour into the bosom of our world. Let the slave-holder as well as the slave be treated as a man. Let his misconceptions of the Law of God, his false views of the divine structure of human society, and of the rights of those whom he holds in servitude, be met in the spirit of kindness and brotherly love, and removed, if possible, by flooding his mind with new light. Let his intelligence be honored by the appliance of sound reasoning; let his sensibilities be moved by direct address to the noblest affections of his nature; and let his moral sense be reached, through his unquestioned relations to God and eternity—and if his errors be not at once overpowered, he may be ultimately won to faith in correct principles, and to a corresponding discharge of his relative duties.

Our confidence of success, however, must rest on God alone. His arm must bring deliverance to the bond-man; and for this, his Spirit must illumine the mind and touch the heart of the taskmaster. It is our privilege and duty, however, to be la-



borers together with Him ; nor is any man so elevated or depressed in the sphere of his action, so widely known or obscure among his fellow-men, so abounding in wealth or sunk in poverty, that he may not walk hand in hand with the Universal Ruler, in this pathway of high and holy achievement ; for no man living is destitute of influence in the sphere where Heaven has placed him. The little Israelitish maid in the court of Syria is not a less important agent in the accomplishment of heaven's high purposes, than the Egyptian Pharaoh or the Chaldean monarch ; and it depends not on learning, wealth or fame to determine the nature or extent of the influence emanating from any single mind, and exerting control over other minds.

To the formation of a correct public sentiment, all labor and influence must be primarily directed. In a country like ours, where distinctions of rank, hereditary honors and exclusive privileges are all but unknown—where all opinions are freely canvassed, and adopted or rejected at pleasure, and where the day laborer uses the ballot box as effectively as the most eminent statesman, it is not possible to achieve so high a moral end, except through the enlightenment of the public mind, and the more thorough purification of the great heart of the Republic. Nor is this enlightenment and purification to be effected, but by the increased diffusion of the spirit of the gospel. In that spirit lies the germ, not only of all that is holy before God, but of all that is noble and beneficent in the actings of man's moral and spiritual nature. Let it possess all hearts, and become the universal regulator of human conduct, and the world is disenthralled, and at once mirrors forth the happiness of heaven.

To the diffusion of this spirit, every one is virtually pledged, who stands committed to the great interests of philanthropy. Every human tongue, indeed, is bound to take up heaven's message of love, and mingle its notes of "good will to men," with those of the angelic choir ; and whoever casts off the obligation, needs the remonstrances of fraternal love, and the teachings of Christian fidelity, to bring him back to duty and to God. But, whoever else may be dumb, when the cause of love to our neighbor needs exposition or enforcement, it is not the MINISTER OF CHRIST. Let his affections ever be stirred within him, and his mind awakened to the claims of down-trodden humanity, and his lips opened to pour forth the warnings of Heaven upon the oppressor, with its commands and entreaties to repentance and the abandonment of his evil ways. It is a subject that demands his earnest study, as involving the vitalities of the Christian faith, and the clearest practical demonstrations of the superiority of revealed religion ; it demands



of him the full development of its moral bearings, under all the solemnities of his commission as an ambassador for Christ, and with all the eloquence he can draw from the schools of prophets and apostles. Whatever else is silent, the pulpit must speak. Whoever beside may indulge in a dignified indifference, the minister of Christ must lift his voice like a trumpet.

Next to the pulpit comes the PRESS, with its mighty enginery, fearlessly to encounter prejudice, battle ignorance, stimulate to intellectual effort and triumph over fanaticism, with all else that conflicts with truth and love. Directed by the spirit of philanthropy, it issues neither the daily or weekly Paper, nor the elaborate Quarterly in vain, while the Tract, and the stately Volume, each in its appropriate sphere contributes powerfully to the wished-for result. True, it has not always been faithful to this holy cause. True, it has sometimes fallen into unworthy hands, and has scattered firebrands, arrows and death over the fair fields of freedom. But this is not its own fault; and since God honors it to convey the "lively oracles" to the ends of the earth, it becomes us to honor it also, by making it the medium of communication with all accessible minds, that if possible, misapprehensions may be corrected, just principles established, and the spirit of freedom infused into all hearts.

And then, ASSOCIATED ACTION, in well devised forms, and under due restrictions, must succeed isolated and individual effort. "Union is strength." "Two are better than one." But the object of the association must be single, and the eye of its members must also be single. To emancipate the slave wherever found, from the yoke of the oppressor, and give him the civil equality which is his inalienable right, is an object of sufficient grandeur to draw upon the energies of any human mind to the utmost, and needs no combination with it of radical revolution in church or state. Wisdom is doubtless profitable to direct, in this case as in all others. It is only necessary that action be regulated by the spirit of love and deference to divine authority. If State or National Legislatures can be led to constitutional and energetic movement by the publicly declared sentiments of their constituents, then let petitions embodying those sentiments in respectful language, load their tables from session to session, and be urged by faithful men with thundering eloquence upon the ears of the listless and averse; or, if this avail not, and men are found in our public councils ready to sell the birth-right of the slave for a mess of pottage, notwithstanding the claims of God and humanity, let them receive immediate dismissal from the service of freemen, without regard to their political orthodoxy in other respects. Whoever will sacrifice the rights of humanity vested in an individual of African descent, is demonstrably unfit to be trusted with the pre-

servation of those rights in his constituents. He that wants philanthropy wants patriotism. He that rescues not the man fallen among thieves, resists not the cry that urges the crucifixion of the Son of God. The betrayer of the poorest man, in whose veins runs a brother's blood, wants but the opportunity and the temptation to betray the brother of high degree. It should therefore be the determination of every patriotic mind, to bring his undivided influence to bear upon the election of discerning and high minded friends of universal liberty, to all places of honor and trust.

In all this, it hardly must be said, that we propose any thing new, nor do we claim to be wiser than all that have gone before us in the labors of philanthropy. Numerous associations have been already formed, and numerous presses have been enlisted in the cause; the pulpit has sometimes spoken forth in tones of power, and the popular lecturer has traversed the land; the author in his study, and the orator at the forum have elaborated argument in every form, and played skilfully on those chords of the human heart that discourse sweet music in the ears of Heaven; resolves have occasionally passed our State Legislatures, nobly sustaining the public sentiment that gave them birth, and petitions, flowing by thousands into the halls of Congress, have excited able and animated discussion; Greek has met Greek on those high places of the field, and auspicious results have already appeared. But the policy of the government is yet undecided, and much remains to be done, through every organ that can reach the public ear or affect the public heart, to give full utterance to the quickened sympathies of philanthropic bosoms, and constrain the rulers of the nation to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly. Words of truth and soberness may safely be spoken at all times, in all places and by all persons; and such words are clearly demanded, by the simple grandeur of the object contemplated, its preciousness to the heart of God, its congeniality with all the interests of man, the certainty of its ultimate attainment, and the prospect of a speedy and effectual termination of the miseries of the victims of oppression.

We should be unjust to the cause of freedom, if we did not refer to the plan of colonizing emancipated slaves, with others of the colored race, upon the shores of Africa. Very many of our most intelligent and philanthropic citizens regard this plan, as entitled to vastly more favor than it has hitherto received. Yet, as is well known, it has been strenuously opposed; and there are questions involved in it, upon which there is still no inconsiderable diversity and contrariety of opinion. To enter upon a discussion of these would lead us aside from

the main object, which we would hope to accomplish in this Report.

Connected also with the plan of colonization is another point of our subject, upon which we deem it appropriate to say a word. We refer to the alledged want of capacity in the African race for an intelligent use of liberty. And in this view, to say nothing of other points, which are of great interest, it would seem to your Committee, that the history and the present state of the colony of Liberia, is worthy of the careful and candid consideration of all, who have any doubts in regard to the natural capabilities of the African race, for all the demands of a well-ordered and happy social organization.

We must remark, however, that facts from other sources of evidence are so accumulated and so overpowering, that incredulity in respect to such capabilities is nothing short of arrant folly or absolute stolidity. Illustrious African names, it is well known, adorn the early history of the Christian church, as well as the annals of ancient literature and government; whilst at this moment there are in our own land orators of African descent, and fugitives from slavery, too, whose eloquence attracts and impresses large and cultivated assemblies. But, as if to afford to all nations a signal exemplification of the capacity of that race, and to put the question forever at rest, divine Providence has planted the colony and established the government of Liberia. We would, therefore, call attention, for a moment, to the condition of the people of that Republic.

The plan of forming a colony on the coast of Africa originated, it is believed, in the heart of northern benevolence, and was matured by the wisdom and prayerfulness of Finley, Caldwell, Mills, and a few others of whom the world was not worthy, and who now sleep in death. Thirty-two years have passed away, and several thousands of the victims of oppression, denied their natural rights in the country of their birth, have been transported to the land of their fathers, and there allowed to enjoy them unmolested. Three hundred miles of continuous sea-coast have been secured to them for an inheritance, and placed under a government as just and stable as our own. Liberia has ceased to be a colony. She has become an independent State, a Republic, a land of the free; and every office in her government, from the highest to the lowest, is filled by men of the African race; and so well filled, that there is more hope of the permanence of the Republic of Liberia, than of that of France. Liberia is at this moment well supplied with preachers and teachers of every grade, chiefly of African descent. The New England system of common schools is in full operation; as is also that of higher seminaries; and the children are found to be as tractable, as ingenious, and as studious, as



the children of pure Anglo-Saxon parents. President Roberts, an African by descent, and having enjoyed only a Liberian education, has stood with credit to himself before the statesmen and diplomatists of England, France and America, negotiating not only an acknowledgment of Liberian nationality, but also treaties of amity and commerce. The people of Liberia are an independent and recognized nation, with a constitution as pure in its principles and liberal in its provisions, with laws as equitable and salutary, and an administration as incorrupt and judicious, as are enjoyed by any people under heaven. Their peace is as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea. Habits of industry and frugality are cherished by them, and the useful productions of the earth are cultivated with success, so as not only to supply abundantly the demands of home consumption, but to seek a market in foreign lands, and give a strong impulse to commercial enterprise. So marked are the indications of public prosperity and individual welfare, that whole tribes of the ignorant and debased natives, with their kings, are soliciting a participation of their immunities, and pledging their lands, persons and children—their all, indeed—to the interest of the government in return. The result of this experiment, as it appears to us, and we think must appear to all fair minded men, demonstrates the capacity of the Africans for all that constitutes a Christian civilization.

We present these facts to our Southern fellow-citizens, beseeching them to settle it in their own minds as an indisputable truth, that the argument by which they have so long endeavored to justify slavery, from the supposed incapacity of the African race for safe and useful self-direction, in any circumstances, is wholly groundless. Let them be assured, that those immortal beings whom they doom by their iron laws to perpetual servitude, ignorance and degradation, are capable, in such circumstances as an enlightened philanthropy may devise, of rising to the attainment of an intellectual and moral character, of a Christian faith and piety which shall render them peers of the men of other races now rejoicing in the blessings of freedom, knowledge and religion. When this truth is fully believed and felt, we are confident that philanthropy and the sense of justice in the slave-holding States will array themselves efficiently on the side of that sentiment now so active in the Christian world, which is demanding the recognition of human rights, and of that Almighty Providence, which, in tones both of terror and of love, is proclaiming "liberty to the captive."

The signs of the times are auspicious. A sentiment of freedom unknown before has recently arisen, which is upheaving the nations, demanding the redress of wrongs, and insisting on the universal emancipation of the oppressed. As when Chris-



tianity was first proclaimed in the midst of paganism, the temples and statues of idolatry crumbled in quick succession before it, so now through the enlightening influences of the same faith, the clouds of oppression are beginning to retire, and in rapid succession the chains are falling from whole people in bondage. Within the last quarter of a century a new impulse has been given to freedom. State after state has published its testimony against the intolerable wrong of slavery. And now, drawing our conclusions from the public acts of the civilized and Christianized world, we hazard nothing when we aver that the voice of Christendom is against it. He who now undertakes to defend the institution of Slavery, does it in the face of the clearest, the most sincerely expressed convictions of almost every Christian country on the globe. He who shall defend it, defends that which Christendom with concurrent voice has united to reprobate, and is hastening to destroy.

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It would be easy to collect a mass of enlightened names, in all ages and countries, against the system, as opposed alike by reason and religion. But our appeal shall be made to acts of public bodies, of parliaments and councils of state—and from these we can make good the assertion, that slavery, like piracy and robbery, wherever it exists, exists in opposition to the condemning voice of the Christian world.

Let us take the last quarter of a century, and see how often and under what variety of forms public condemnation has been passed on the whole system of slavery, under every name.

We begin with Austria, that large and influential European state. On the 25th day of June, 1826, "it was declared by an ordinance of his Imperial and Royal Majesty the Emperor, that any slave from the moment he treads the soil of the Imperial and Royal Dominions of Austria, or even merely steps on board an Austrian vessel, shall be free." Brief and comprehensive words! Uttered by the constituted head and the united voice of more than thirty millions of people.

Pass on now to the Spanish provinces, that extend across the whole northern portions of South America, between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. They had thrown off the yoke of the mother country, and under the names of Columbia and Bolivia, comprising a population of nearly five millions more, had taken their place among modern republics. In 1828 they proclaimed freedom to all the slaves. Certain revenues were set apart for the purpose of carrying the act of emancipation into execution, and children born after a certain period were to be free.

Then followed the neighboring state of Mexico in the same glorious career. Having in like manner achieved her own independence, she published, Sept. 15, 1829, a decree for the entire abolition of slavery, containing these remarkable words: "Being desirous to signalize the anniversary of independence by an act of national justice and beneficence, which may redound to the advantage and support of so inestimable a good, which may tend to the aggrandizement of the Republic, and which may reinstate an unfortunate portion of its inhabitants in the sacred rights which nature gave them, and the nation should protect by wise and wholesome laws—I (the President) have resolved to decree that Slavery is and shall remain abolished in this Republic." Whatever may be the fate of this distracted, unhappy Republic, in the darkest hour of her degradation, this act will ever be a bright remembered page in her history.

Then we have to record the Act of the British Government, by which, Aug. 1, 1834, 800,000 slaves were set free in a day, in the British West India Islands. This act, the most memorable in the modern history of emancipation, was carried into effect without bloodshed, without tumult, or the outbreak of violent passion, but with the solemn enthusiasm becoming the great occasion, in the places of religious worship, amid prayers and hymns of praise. The experiment is now in a course of successful operation. If there have been temporary drawbacks, arising from the very nature of the case, it is now proved beyond a doubt, not only that it may be made without hazard, but that the great gift of liberty cannot be bestowed upon any without physical and moral advantage to all.

We hasten to another testimony, to show the settled conviction which prevails respecting the wrong and inhumanity of slavery. We refer to the decrees of the late head of the Roman Catholic church. December 13, 1839, Gregory XVI. published once more the earnest remonstrances of the Catholic church against every species of involuntary servitude. He says,—“We admonish by our apostolical authority and urgently invoke in the name of God all Christians of whatever condition, that none, henceforth, dare subject to slavery, unjustly persecute, or despoil of their goods, Indians, Negroes, or any other classes of men.”—A protest urged again by the present Pontiff in language as emphatic and authoritative.

There is a contagion in the spread of liberty. The spirit which succors the down-trodden, and remembers the forgotten, is wafted like winged seed into most congenial spots, and takes root in unlooked-for places. Hence, as we pass from the centre of civilization and religion to a semi-barbarous region, there is another testimony to the worth of individual freedom. The

Bey of Tunis, at the head of two millions of subjects, January 22, 1846, declared his sovereign pleasure in the following terms: "The servitude imposed on a part of the human kind whom God has created, is a very cruel thing, and our heart shrinks from it. Now, therefore, we have thought proper to publish that we have abolished men's slavery throughout our dominions, inasmuch as we regard all slaves who are on our territory as free, and do not recognize the legality of their being kept as property." We have here a sentiment worthy of a most enlightened *Christian* ruler!

Soon afterwards, in a little kingdom hard by the frozen zone, the heart of royalty is melted, and a decree is issued by the king of Denmark, in which it is proclaimed, July 3, 1848, "that all unfree in Danish West India Islands are from to-day emancipated." It is added in the *St. Thomas Times*, two days afterwards: "The lively joy with which the boon was received by the unfree in the Island can be easily imagined; but we are happy to state that although the decree was so sudden, so unexpected, no other sounds were heard but those of rejoicing and thankfulness."

Early in the same year, the Provisional Government of France decreed the emancipation of slavery in all her colonies. When the great capital had driven the king from his throne, and the nation was emancipated, the first act was to strike off the chains from the limbs of the slave, within the farthest bounds of the Republic. In some of the provinces, the decrees of the government were carried into partial effect only; in others, the acts of emancipation were consummated. The last, of which any account has been given, took place on the 10th of August, 1848, in Cayenne and French Guiana. And it contains a testimony, not only to the extent to which the spirit of liberty is now spread, but to the safety of immediate, unconditional emancipation. Here also the most serious apprehensions existed, lest when the proclamation of freedom should be made, there should be tumult and bloodshed. The inhabitants for many days previous went armed; but on that day, says an eye-witness, "little by little, confidence was re-established; and the thronging of the inhabitants through the streets commenced; the *Te Deum* was sung at the church, after which more than a thousand negroes marched to the front of the Governor's house to thank him for the proclamation made by him giving them their freedom; and it was truly admirable to us who so little expected it, to see these poor people, who immediately after repaired to the church, and then quietly kneeling down and lifting up their hands to heaven, thanked God for giving them their liberty."

Thus have we testimony from almost every portion of

Christendom ; and we think that we are fully sustained in the position, that the enlightened sentiment of the day is diametrically opposed to the extension and continuance of slavery ; and that he who upholds and defends the system, does it in opposition to the distinctly avowed and settled convictions of the Christian world.

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But we are well aware, that, in the judgment of many, there is in the fundamental laws of our government, a very formidable, if not insurmountable obstacle in the way of the abolition of American slavery. Your Committee have, therefore, devoted some attention to this part of the subject before them, and would be glad, if the limits of their Report would allow a more detailed historical view of it.

The Government of Great Britain established slavery in this country ; and up to the period of our Revolution, the authority of that government was its only legal sanction among us. The Declaration of Independence subverted the authority of that government in all the colonies consenting to or adopting it ; but did not subvert and annul all the laws which had been established in the colonies under that authority. It did, however, affirm and indicate principles, both in regard to man and his rights, and to government, its duty and obligations, utterly inconsistent with slavery and the maintenance and execution of all the laws in relation to it. This inconsistency was felt and acknowledged by many ; and during the Revolutionary struggle the Declaration and its principles had a manifest influence upon the public mind, and in some cases upon legal action in regard to slavery.

Dr. Belknap, in his account of the decrease of slavery in Massachusetts,\* says : " At the beginning of our controversy with Great Britain, several persons, who before had entertained sentiments opposed to the slavery of the blacks, did then take occasion publicly to remonstrate against the inconsistency of contending for our own liberty, and at the same time depriving other people of theirs." It was under the effect produced by the Declaration of Independence, and the influence of the public opinion of which it was in part both the source and the expression, that juries in Massachusetts in several cases rendered verdicts in favor of slaves, previous to the adoption of the constitution of 1780, which constitution by the decision of the

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\* Mass. Hist. Coll. vol. IV. p. 201.



supreme court in 1783, was interpreted as establishing upon broad and general principles the liberties of the negroes.

There are misapprehensions and misrepresentations of the constitution, on the subject of slavery, which seem to have originated in sheer ignorance of the history of our Federal Government. Many intelligent men are probably unacquainted with the real origin and import of the enumeration of "*three-fifths of all other persons*," beside "free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed."

In the report of the committee of the Continental Congress, appointed to draft articles of confederation, it was proposed, "that all charges of war, and all other expenses that shall be incurred for the common defence or the general welfare, shall be defrayed out of a common treasury, which shall be supplied by the several colonies, in proportion to the number of inhabitants of every age, sex and quality, except Indians not paying taxes in each colony." The report was submitted July 12, 1776. Some days afterwards, while under discussion in committee of the whole house, Mr. Chase, of Maryland, endeavored to obviate some objections, by an amendment, "that the quotas should be paid, not by the number of the inhabitants of every condition, but by that of 'the white inhabitants.'" The amendment suggested and advocated by Mr. Chase, was strenuously resisted by John Adams and others; mainly because, as was contended, *inhabitants* were to be taken as an index of property, and, therefore, if taxes should be apportioned according to the number of *white* inhabitants, the smallest share of the burden would fall upon those States in which were the greatest number of slaves. And it was well understood, that the Southern States were much richer than the Northern.

The comparative value of free and slave labor very materially affected the views of the different speakers,—as may be seen by an examination of the "Madison Papers." As a compromise, Mr. Harrison, of Virginia, proposed that two slaves should be counted as one free man;—it being doubtful in his opinion, if two slaves did any more work, and thus, as producers of wealth, could justly be reckoned as any more than equal to one free man.

Both the amendment and the proposition of the committee were rejected. It was agreed to apportion the taxes, according to the valuation of houses and lands. But such valuation having afterwards been found impracticable, the taxes were assessed according to the estimated population of the different States respectively.

It is of much importance here to notice, that, in the debate upon the articles of confederation, the subject of slavery was

introduced, not upon any question of natural or moral right, but upon a question of finance, or of political economy. Our Southern brethren, and ourselves also, now look at the subject from a very different position from that in which it was viewed by the members of the Continental Congress in 1776, or by the framers of the constitution, in 1787.

In 1783, the Continental Congress made an attempt to revive the national credit. A committee reported, "that the quotas of the several States should be in proportion to the number of inhabitants of every age, sex and condition, provided that in such enumeration no persons shall be included who are bound to servitude for life, according to the laws of the State to which they belong, *other than such as may be between the ages of — years.*" Insuperable objections were urged against any apportionment, which contemplated *the age* of persons. The proportion of absolute numbers was finally agreed to,—slaves being rated as five to three. One member proposed the ratio of four to three; another of four to one. Some were in favor of two to one, or of three to one. The ratio of five to three was, in Mr. Madison's view, as it would seem, a proof of liberality and magnanimity on the part of those immediately interested in the avails of slave-labor.

In the legislation of 1776 and 1783, we doubtless have the natural history and the true import of the provision of the second section of the first article of the constitution, which determines the apportionment of representatives and direct taxes. The provision was adopted, because members of the Convention, who were "principled against slavery," yet were unwilling to seem to do injustice to the slave-holding States, by an apportionment of direct taxes, without an equivalent representation. Throughout the discussions of the Convention in 1787, as well as those of the Continental Congress, the Northern and Southern States appear in no such attitude, upon the subject of slavery, as would now be presented, in the existing state of moral and political opinions. The most decided convictions against the right and the policy of slave-holding were freely expressed by members of the Convention, from the south as well as the north of the Potomac. And a speech of Gouverneur Morris, of Pennsylvania, would satisfy the most uncompromising and unsparing antagonist of the slave-holding system, among all who now desire its speedy and total extirpation. "He never would concur in upholding domestic slavery. It was a nefarious institution. It was the curse of Heaven on the States where it prevailed." \*

The compromise, therefore, by which the enumeration of the

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\* Madison Papers, pp. 1263-5.

"three-fifths" prevailed, was not such as is now generally maintained by the representatives of the slave-holding States. It was primarily, if not strictly, financial. It may be true that some of those States would not have been willing to come into the Union, unless some such indulgence towards the "peculiar institution" had been granted. But the actual feeling of other members, who, in the circumstances, gave consent, was no doubt the same or similar to that of Mr. Williamson, of North Carolina, who, in the warm debate on the slave-trade, for the continuance of which South Carolina and Georgia were so importunate, said, "that both in opinion and practice he was against slavery, but thought it more in favor of humanity, from a view of all circumstances, to let in South Carolina and Georgia on those terms, [viz., that the slave-trade should not be prohibited previous to 1808,] than to exclude them from the Union."\* And Mr. Madison, in opposing the continuance of the slave-trade beyond the year 1800, said, "twenty years will produce all the mischief that can be apprehended from the liberty to import slaves. So long a term will be more dishonorable to the American character, than to say nothing about it in the constitution."† We are mortified to say, that, if every member of the Eastern States had then joined with Mr. Madison, and his noble associates, the slave-trade would not have continued, as it did, until 1808. Principle yielded to "the mammon of unrighteousness."

But upon the naked question, whether *men were to be acknowledged as property*, although taxed as such in the condition of slaves, it would not have been possible to have obtained a major vote in the Convention of 1787. And it is an utterly false averment, as we contend, that the constitution was understood by the framers of it, to be a recognition of slavery, as a system or institution. If the Southern States, instead of being the richest, had been the poorest, we are fully warranted to say, that the world would never have heard of the enumeration of "three-fifths;" and no such indelible stain would have ever marred the national glory of the charter of our Federal Union.

And now, as in the result the Government of the Union has been sustained without such taxation as was acknowledged to be the ground of the rule of representation, with what propriety do statesmen and others of the South so determinedly maintain the well-known doctrine of Southern rights? But we cannot pursue this and some other inquiries, which, however, are of great practical interest, in the present relations of the free and the slave-holding States.

That by the majority of the Convention which framed the

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\* Madison Papers, p. 1428. † Do. p. 1427.

constitution of the United States, slavery was deemed a temporary institution, is evident from the tone of much of the discussion had at the time, both within and without that body; and might be inferred from the single circumstance, that the express mention of it, by name, is so carefully avoided in that instrument, that the words which refer to it would be unintelligible, if the fact or the existence of slavery did not interpret them.

The *animus* of the framers of the constitution might also be inferred from the fact, that its adoption was immediately followed by the establishment of societies for the abolition of slavery in Virginia, Maryland, and North Carolina, in which societies many of those very statesmen, who had been members of the Convention, including Washington and Jefferson, were actively engaged. Up to the date of the constitution, the black population had failed to reproduce its own number, under the law of natural increase. It was supposed, therefore, as has been already suggested in this Report, that on the cessation of the slave-trade, the gradual extinction of the colored race within our borders would begin, and slavery would cease. This would have been the result, perhaps, had not the purchase of Louisiana and the extension of slave-territory opened a home market and acted as a bounty or premium on production.

As such were the views and expectations of the framers of the constitution, it is not surprising that all which that instrument can be interpreted or made to contain, is the reluctant and half-latent acknowledgment of the existence of slavery, with provision for the civil estimate in respect to representation, and the treatment in respect to fugitives, of those who then happened to be included under it, without indicating any purpose or possibility of its extension, but implying the contrary; and without making any provision, or conferring any power, by which it could be lawfully extended, or by which the rights (now so called) which it confers, could be legitimated in any State where it did not then exist, or upon any territory that might thereafter be added to the Union. This, as we believe, it can be demonstrated, is the extent of the connection between the Constitution of the United States and Slavery. And in what we have now to say, in commenting more particularly upon the language of the constitution, we must omit many historical and other citations, which a full view of this part of the subject would very urgently require us to introduce.

That slavery described by the periphrasis of "*persons held to service*," is recognized by the constitution, as existing in some of the States of the Union, will of course not be denied; and it must be admitted also, that so far as it is recognized by that instrument, and until it shall in some legal manner be abol-



ished, it is the duty of the judiciary to sustain the provisions of the constitution in respect to it. In interpreting these provisions, we should always bear in mind the circumstances under which they were adopted. Most important also it is, that we bear in mind the principle, that slavery, from its very nature and character, is a wrong in itself, having no foundation in natural or moral right; and whoever avers that it has a legal existence within any particular territory or jurisdiction, must prove that it exists by clear and distinct provision of law. This principle is recognized by eminent English jurists, who, when they have had occasion to speak of slavery, uniformly say,—“It is of such a nature, that it is incapable of being introduced on any reasons, moral or political, but only provisions of law; and it is so odious, that nothing can be suffered to support it, but positive law.”

American jurists have recognized the same principle. In pronouncing a judgment of the supreme court, chief justice Marshall, speaking of the slave trade, uses this language—“That it is contrary to the law of nature will scarcely be denied. That every man has a natural right to the fruits of his own labor is generally admitted, and that no other person can rightfully deprive him of those fruits and appropriate them against his will, seems to be the necessary result of the admission.” These views and principles have received the sanction of the supreme court of Massachusetts, and will be sustained by every intelligent legal tribunal; and on this ground it may be maintained, that no intendment in favor of slavery can be made out from the constitution, except such as is the necessary result of express provision. In reference to right, justice, and equity, the construction applied to any instrument or law, is liberal and favorable, so as thereby, if practicable, to uphold the right. When any instrument or law is designed to uphold or accomplish a purpose not in conformity with natural right, the construction adopted is strict and rigid, so as thereby to limit and restrain the evil which might otherwise exist. Applying this just principle of construction to the constitution of the United States, in its relations to slavery, we say that it was no part of the intention of that instrument to create or establish the institution of slavery, or to enlarge its territory, or to give to Congress any power or right to establish it, or to recognize or permit its existence in any State or Territory of the Union, where it did not exist at the time the constitution was framed and adopted. At that time the institution had a legal existence within certain States; this limited existence, as a matter of compromise, was permitted to continue. Without and beyond these States, slavery has and can have no legal existence under the constitution. The provisions of that instrument and its

whole spirit and principles are *prohibitory* as regards slavery over all other soil that has since, is now, or may become, a portion of the Union. For that instrument, as is asserted in its first clause, was formed, among other things, to establish justice and secure the blessings of liberty to its framers and their posterity. Slavery most certainly is not essential to justice or the blessings of liberty. It is in direct conflict and opposition to these purposes. This being the spirit and purpose of the constitution, no intendment in support of slavery can be drawn from it, but such as is upheld by the most strict and rigid interpretation of the express provisions by which it is to a certain extent recognized. These provisions are but two in number. The first, and in some respects the most important one, is in these words, "The migration or importation of such persons *as any of the States now existing* shall think proper to admit, shall not be prohibited by Congress prior to the year one thousand eight hundred and eight." This provision is an express limitation of the right to import and consequently to hold slaves, in language which admits of only one construction. This right was thereby restrained to the States then existing, and of these States it was to be exercised only by those in which at that time, slavery had a legal existence. No broader construction can be put upon this provision. The second provision is thus expressed. "No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall be discharged of such service, but shall be delivered up to the party to whom such service is due."

This second provision was not designed to extend or enlarge the first—but only to uphold it in the limited manner, in which it was intended to be interpreted, and goes to prove that that *limited interpretation is correct*. By the universal principles of law, as known to communities in which slavery has no existence—whenever a slave puts his foot upon the territory of such community, he becomes free. The second provision was adopted to obviate the effect of this principle; because without it a slave escaping from a slave-holding State into a non-slave-holding one, would be regarded as free, notwithstanding the right secured to his owner under the first provision; and the fact that it was deemed necessary to insert this second provision, shows that the first was understood and was to be interpreted in the limited manner already noticed.

An opinion different from the position stated above, is held by some, who, however they may express themselves, rely for support to their opinion upon that provision of the constitution, which says that, "citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens of the several States." But this provision was clearly not intended to enlarge the right

of slavery, as recognized to a limited extent in the two provisions upon that subject already referred to. To infer from it a right in a citizen of a slave-holding State to become a citizen of a non-slave-holding State, carrying his slaves with him and exercising over them therein the rights and power which he had been accustomed to exercise in the State from which he removed, is a supposition so monstrously absurd, that it could never be for a moment entertained, save by one in whom the strong influence of passion and self-interest had blinded the judgment. Let the principle involved in this inference be carried out and applied to all other matters as well as to slavery, and every law of every State may be in turn modified or subverted by it, and inextricable confusion introduced into the administration of justice—or what would then be the administration of injustice.

The law of Massachusetts punishes murder with death. The law of Michigan spares life, but condemns to perpetual imprisonment for the same crime. To infer that because the constitution says, "citizens of each State shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States," therefore a citizen of Michigan can come to Massachusetts, either on a visit or for permanent residence, and committing murder, may claim to be exempt from the death penalty, and subject only to imprisonment for life, on the ground that this was his privilege and immunity under the laws in the State of Michigan, would not be more absurd than to infer from the same provision of the constitution that a citizen of Carolina may come to reside in Massachusetts and claim to exercise and enjoy in the latter the privileges and immunities which were guarantied to him as a citizen slave-holder in the former State. Both inferences, and all such inferences, are unwarrantable and absurd.

The clause of the constitution under consideration, was simply intended to prevent the several States from prohibiting the free ingress and egress of citizens of one State into and from another. Under it any citizen of the United States has a right to pass from Maine to Texas, and from Massachusetts to Oregon or California, unmolested and unquestioned, and to fix his residence in any State that he chooses; but in passing from one to another State, he does not carry with him the laws of the State from which he passes, but becomes subject immediately to the law of the State within which he may chance to be.

Those who uphold slavery, have never urged or pretended that a citizen of a State in which slavery existed at the time of the adoption of the constitution, could carry and hold his slaves as such, into a State in which at that time slavery had no legal

existence. They have admitted, tacitly at least, that, in this respect, slavery so far as recognized was territorially restricted by the constitution, and that thus far the strict construction of that instrument in the matter of slavery was correct.

They have contended, however, that new territory, acquired by conquest, by treaty or purchase, belongs to the several States in their collective capacity—and therefore a slave-holder has a right to occupy such new territory with his slaves.

Admit the premises of the argument, yet the conclusion does not follow. The slave-holder going to new territory, must take the law of the territory as he finds it. He does not and cannot carry there the law of the State from which he goes. But it is answered, that Congress may make rules and regulations for such territory, and therefore may sanction the existence of slavery in it, and ought to do it, in order that the citizens of all the States, slave-holding and non-slave-holding, may have equal privileges and inducements to settle upon it.

In reply to this argument and reasoning, we say that the question is not what Congress ought to do, nor what it would be wise or expedient or politic for it to do, but simply what has it the power to do? We by no means admit that it would be wise, expedient or just in Congress to recognize, permit or establish slavery in any new territory, under any circumstances. We strenuously maintain the contrary. But it is not necessary to discuss this point, because Congress, even if it thought it wise or expedient, has not the power. It is intrusted undoubtedly with power to make laws and regulations for the new territories of the Union; but it cannot establish over any territory, new or old, any rules or regulations inconsistent with the spirit, purpose and principles of the *constitution*, or in violation of or opposition to the clear meaning and intent of its express provisions. All power in the United States Government, executive, legislative and judicial, is subservient to this instrument, the constitution, which is the *Magna Charta* of the American Republic. The great object of this charter, as already stated, was and is to “establish justice and secure the blessings of liberty to its framers and their posterity.” As an inducement to the slave-holding States existing at its origin to assent thereto, they were permitted to retain their slaves within their own territory and to increase them by importation till 1808—and in the one case the restriction as to territory, is as clear and express as in the other the restriction as to time; in neither case had Congress any discretionary right or power given it. The obligation of Congress to stop the slave-trade at and after 1808, its utter incompetency, without trampling upon the constitution, to permit or authorize by law the continuance of that traffic after that period, is not more absolute and manifest than



its obligation to restrain slavery to the limits within which it was held at the adoption of the constitution, and its incompetency to extend it by law beyond those limits. The provision of the constitution, which directly, or by implication, gives to the government of the United States power to extend slavery, cannot be pointed out ; and any treaty, any purchase, any act of Congress, by and through which slavery has been thus extended, must be regarded as unconstitutional—a violation of the express provision, and of the spirit, purpose and intent of the constitution—a violation and infringement not only of the claims of humanity, but of that justice which it is the object of the constitution to promote, and of those blessings of liberty which it was intended to secure, perpetuate and diffuse.

The very statement of all the constitutional argument which can be made out for an opposite conclusion, shows its fallacy and weakness. From the proposition, or premise, “that slavery is permitted by the constitution to exist, or is recognized as existing within certain territory,” the conclusion sought to be deduced is,—“therefore Congress, the law-making power, may establish slavery within territory where it is not permitted to exist, or recognized as existing, by that instrument.” The conclusion is a perfect *non sequitur*. No such power is expressly conferred by that instrument. And the very principles upon which, and the great purposes for which, it is declared to have been framed and adopted, make it impossible that any such power can be implied or was intended to be implied.

It has been urged, that slavery may be established in the territories by the action of their inhabitants. These have a right, it is said, to determine whether or not slavery shall be permitted to exist within their borders, and if so disposed may decide that it shall. It requires no great penetration to detect the fallacy of this reasoning. The territories belonging to the United States, are controlled, directly or indirectly, by the legislation of Congress ; but the legislation of Congress over the territories, as well as all its other legislation, is controlled and restricted by the constitution of the United States. The people of a territory, the moment said territory is annexed, come under the control of the United States, and are subject to the constitution of the United States. They can pass no acts, make no laws, and Congress can approve none that they make, but such as are in harmony with the provisions and principles of the constitution ; and these provisions and principles forbid the creation, the establishment of slavery in all territory where it did not exist, when the constitution was adopted. Whenever it is proposed to admit a new territory into the Union as a State, its constitution must be approved by Congress, which body cannot approve or permit any thing therein which con-

flicts with the fundamental principles and purpose of the constitution of the United States—which are declared to be, the promotion of justice and the security and perpetuation of the blessings of liberty ;—and slavery, which is the promotion of injustice and the loss of liberty to thousands, does conflict with them. Congress, therefore, in obedience to the letter and spirit of the constitution, is as much bound to forbid and prevent the admission into the Union of a slave-holding State, as of a State establishing for its internal, domestic government, a monarchical form, with an hereditary king and nobles.

So in regard to the treaty-making power, it is said that treaties are the supreme law of the land, and, therefore, when territory is acquired by treaty, in which slavery exists, such treaty may rightfully stipulate that slavery shall be continued. This conclusion has no foundation. Treaties, rightfully made, are undoubtedly the supreme law of the land ; but the question whether they are rightfully made, is a question to be determined by the constitution ; and no treaty which infringes that, can be regarded as the law of this country. Congress has no power to make a treaty, any of the provisions of which are in violation of the fundamental principles and purpose of the constitution. Congress has no more power to acquire territory by treaty, in which treaty it is stipulated that a certain number and class of inhabitants of that territory and their posterity, shall be held as slaves, than it has to acquire territory by treaty, in which treaty it is stipulated, that all the inhabitants of all classes in that territory shall be held as slaves. And its approval of these treaties, in the one case or the other, would not be more wrong and inhuman, than it would, in both cases, be unconstitutional. It cannot be made out from the constitution, that Congress has the power, either direct or implied, to extend slavery. If Congress has not the power to extend, it must and ought to restrain it. This conclusion necessarily follows ; because the very provisions which show that Congress has not the power to extend slavery, prove that in adhering to and maintaining these provisions, it *must* restrain it. It is intended by the constitution to be restrained to the territory within which it was included at the adoption of the constitution ; and all extension of it beyond those limits has been made, not by an adherence to the compromises (as they are called) and purposes of the constitution, but in disregard and violation of them.

The connection between slavery and the constitution of the United States, involves one other point of interest, viz., the District of Columbia. Congress having exclusive legislation over this District, it is contended, on the one hand, that it may and ought to abolish slavery ; and, on the other, that it cannot

rightfully, and therefore ought not to do this. Undoubtedly there are nice and delicate points, both of equity and constitutional law, involved in this matter, which we have not time or ability to discuss. One or two points, however, would seem to be very clear.

If Congress has *exclusive* legislation over the District, it has exclusive control of this matter of slavery in the District, and can do three things.

1. It can prohibit the introduction of slaves into the District from other States, and their sale in the District, to be transferred into other States; and thus greatly diminish the evil of the institution, and entirely prevent the District from being and continuing the great slave mart of the Union.

2. It can abolish slavery immediately, and forever; and if the act of abolition contained a provision to pay the masters the full value of their slaves, no advocate of slavery could complain that injustice was done to the masters.

3. It can pass a law of prospective abolition—a law providing that all persons within the District, on and after a certain specified time, shall be free, without providing any compensation to the masters. Such a law could not, justly, be regarded as an infringement of the private right of property; because, in this case, the supposed right of property is too remote and contingent to be made the foundation of public wrong. It would be in accordance with the legislation of several of the largest States which have abolished slavery.

Till, then, some such laws are passed, and provision made for its extinction, the Constitution, the Congress, and the WHOLE PEOPLE of the United States are responsible before the world, for the evil and the wrong, the shame and the disgrace of slavery in the District of Columbia, and in all the Territories of the United States.

We have incidentally referred above to the *right of property* in slaves, as it would be affected by emancipation. The distinct statement of a few general principles—principles which have indeed been implied throughout all this discussion—may serve, perhaps, to strengthen our position.

1. One man has no natural right of property in another. This proposition is so nearly self-evident, that no argument can be necessary in support of it, and no illustration render it clearer. To assume the existence of such a right is, in effect,



to deny that mankind are of one nature, and that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men,"—to sanction wars of classes and races upon one another for their mutual subjugation,—to justify a state of enmity between neighbors,—to repudiate the great Christian law of "doing unto others as we would that they should do unto us,"—to maintain the propriety of robbery and violence, and thus to subvert the fundamental principles of morality as declared in the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2. As one man has no natural right of property in another, neither can he *acquire* that right, so that the possession shall be unqualified and absolute, or a perfect ownership. The only mode in which he may acquire it *at all*, except in the case of punishment for crime, is by purchase or gift from the real owner—as when one man sells or surrenders to another his *own* time, liberty, skill and strength. But "the things of a man" which he may not justly sell or relinquish, cannot justly be bought or taken from him. Thus the rights of conscience, the responsibilities of a soul made in the image of God, freedom to do right and to refuse to do wrong, the capacity of improvement, the obligations of religion, are not disposable possessions. He who wrests them from another, as well as he who voluntarily resigns them, violates the laws of the kingdom of heaven. No man may sell them or in any way part with them; no man may buy them or in any way take them from another. They are inalienable. Now, if slavery were the result of a contract, that fact would relieve it, in some degree, of its enormity; but even then, the contract would be void; inasmuch as it takes from the slave what no one has a right either to sell or to purchase, to give or to receive. But slavery, instead of being the result of a contract, has its origin in arbitrary power, and is maintained by the continued exercise of that power.

3. The principles of natural right and justice are universal and immutable. They are modified by no circumstances which man can control, and subject to no exceptions which he may choose. They can be violated with impunity by no earthly power. They apply to men organized in society, acting through institutions and laws and acted upon by them, with the same force and to the same extent as to separate individuals; that which is contrary to those principles and forbidden by them in the one case being equally contrary to them and forbidden by them in the other. It hence follows, that if one man has no natural right of property in another, the state, or body politic, has no such right; and, therefore, that the assumption of that right in the form of constitutions and laws by which men are taken and declared to be property, is an unrighteous usurpation.



4. But as no society is organized upon pure principles of Right and Justice, and the wisest human legislation is but an approximation, more or less distant, to Perfect Law, a question arises as to the extent to which allegiance is due to the state when its requirements, as in the case of laws enforcing slavery, are manifestly founded in injustice. We answer this question, without scruple, by saying, that it is the duty of those who, by their position, are subject to such requirements, to submit to them only as far as is necessary for the integrity and peace of the state. As overt resistance would be insurrectionary and seditious, so patient and uncomplaining acquiescence would be inconsistent with the law of love to man, and with the spirit of that religion which inculcates "deliverance to the captives," and whose office it is to "break every yoke" but that which itself imposes.

It should be borne in mind, in this connection, that the Idea of a state is one thing and the Fact another. Sagacious, thoughtful, and good men have always a vision of an order of society more or less in advance of that in which they live. Indeed, that vision is common to man. Every where the Idea of society is above the Reality, and is prophetic of change and improvement. Now, it is clearly incumbent on all, while submitting, by a moral necessity, and to the extent of that necessity, to imperfect institutions and unjust and oppressive laws, to use their utmost exertions to improve those institutions and change those laws; endeavoring to make the Fact correspond to the Idea of a state, to bring its spirit and life into harmony with the abstract principles of Right and Justice.

It is, therefore, the duty of the people of the United States to submit to the laws of the land in their recognition and support of slavery, so far and only so far as the integrity and peace of the state require such submission; while it is demanded of them by all the principles of justice and humanity, and by every attribute of God, to use all peaceful means in their power to annul those laws, and thus to redeem their fellow-men in bondage from that condition of degradation and cruelty in which they are held as property, and bought and sold like brutes.

We do not deny, but acknowledge the *legal* right of property in slaves. We admit that "that is property" for the time being "which the law declares to be property." We would not counsel interference with the slave-holders in their exercise of this right as long as it exists. But we assert that all laws sanctioning or upholding slavery and giving to man property in man, are contrary to justice and humanity and in direct violation of the precepts of Christianity; and that, on this account, it is the duty of all good citizens *in all parts of the country*,

and especially of the professed disciples of Christ, to demand their immediate abrogation. We cannot doubt that this is the sentiment of a large majority of the people of the United States, nor that it is daily spreading, and acquiring intensity and strength ; nor, still further, that it is destined, at no remote period, to render slavery as universally odious as it is manifestly unjust. If we are not to be disappointed in this expectation, and if loss of property ensues from its fulfilment to those whose accumulations are in the bones and sinews and blood of their fellow-men, they will suffer only that which is incident to all property held under laws that are liable to be changed at the discretion of the sovereign power ; and they will have no more claim to indemnity on the score of *justice*, than that which may be urged in behalf of those who, from a like cause, may suffer depreciation or total loss of any other species of property.

Yet, if it should be made to appear that the abolition of slavery would be followed by great loss and general distress in that part of the country where the institution is established, the principles of the gospel would demand that the other and stronger parts should share a burden thus created, and imposed by regard to the common good and in obedience to the dictates of humanity and religion ; nor can it for a moment be questioned that the people of the free States would cheerfully and with large liberality coöperate with their brethren of the slave States in remedying the inconveniences and alleviating the pecuniary evils which might be the temporary result of emancipation.

But while avowing this opinion we do not hesitate to declare our belief, that, instead of pecuniary loss and other disadvantages, the abolition of slavery would be followed by an increase of wealth, thrift, general intelligence, and comfort, throughout the slave States. The path of justice and mercy is not a way of darkness, but "like the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Sterility, want, anarchy and crime have never been the consequences, amongst any people, of loyalty to God and supreme devotion to the principles of righteousness ; on the contrary, fealty to God and respect for the rights of his children,—especially of the weak, ignorant, and defenceless,—surely bring with them, both by the general laws of the world and the special dispensations of heaven, the best blessings that fall to the lot of man in the social state.

\* We do not here go into the question of the relations which will subsist between masters and slaves after emancipation takes place, but content ourselves with observing, that there is wisdom enough in the country to devise, and power enough to execute, measures for the equal advantage of both ; and that,—whether by apprenticeship, by voluntary colonization, or by labor for wages, we do not presume to determine the precise

mode—in our judgment, the slaves, when set free, will be less burdensome, and a cause of less perplexity and trouble to the white inhabitants of the slave-holding States, than they are, while, as at present, in a condition of bondage. It is not, however, on any economical grounds that we urge emancipation. We cannot fail to take a higher and broader view of the subject. We rest our demand on the inviolable laws of Justice, on the eternal principles of Humanity, on the irreversible dictates of Religion in the soul, and on the Revelation by Jesus Christ of the perfect will of God.

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In conclusion of this Report, it only remains to present some of those motives and considerations which should induce all the citizens of this country to seek the extinction of slavery within its borders.

These considerations must have suggested themselves, indeed, at every stage of the preceding discussion. It is impossible to sketch the real features of the slave-system, without perceiving the impregnable strength of the argument against it. Slavery is its own impeachment; its own condemnation. As the legal idea of the system is to make *MAN property*, so its inevitable result—however its inherent wrongs may be mitigated by the compassion of individual masters—is to crush whatever is noblest in humanity beneath the weight of its chain. Mind must be fettered, as well as the limbs; for the first real waking of intellect will be the signal of insurrection. And if affection, conscience, the soul itself still live in the breast of the bondman, it is because the hand of man *cannot* extinguish the flame which God enkindled, and not because there is any mercy in the nature of slavery. It is a cruel taunt to speak of the provision for the physical comfort of the slave, which may be made—even though he never knew hunger or nakedness, and never bled beneath the lash—as a real mitigation of this towering wrong. It is a worse cruelty to speak of his apparent happiness as any alleviation, when humanity must be torn out of his being to make him happy amidst his bonds;—nay, not happy—for we will not profanely use a word which is sometimes applied to thoughts of divine joy—but to make him wear the sad show of happiness. No argument, no appeal, can add one particle of force to this simple statement, could it be fully made. Every human heart would know by intuition, unless every manly feeling had perished, that the instincts of humanity and the spirit of Christ alike condemned it. As well might we attempt



to prove that the condition of the lost soul—once opened in the depths of its woe—was not the bliss of heaven. The real office of any appeal upon such a theme can only be to bring the public mind and heart into a condition to see the simple truth,—to take the film from our eyes, so that the light which is shining all around us may stream into our souls,—to present the question itself, separated from all evasions, stripped of all disguises, before the bar of conscience.

We present no motives, no considerations, therefore, as the basis of our appeal, except those which belong to the domain of conscience. We should be false to our Master, if we did not place high above all other thoughts, those everlasting truths of God, by which individuals and nations must be judged. However men may regard such reasoning, we can recognize no other standard. The disastrous effects of slavery upon a nation's true prosperity, the curse that it brings upon labor, the idleness and improvidence that it engenders—which prove it to be equally a mistake and a crime—we do not present in any prominence. These results—which, considered entirely apart from its sad effects upon character, the reeking sensualities it produces—blight the territories long defiled by its presence, as the drought withers every green thing in nature ;—these results are impertinent in this higher discussion. We admire that Providence which always unites true prosperity with obedience to God's everlasting law. We look with shuddering awe upon the sure connection between sin and suffering ; sometimes making the physical frame the slave of the intoxicating cup, for instance, the minister of a torture that is a fit image of hell ; giving, in some such example, an illustration of a law that runs through the whole universe of life. But the bright result in the one case, or the woe in the other, must not come into the scale, when we weigh the eternal obligation of Christian truth. Even if it could be true, under the government of God, that slavery might secure the blessings which come as a crowd of attending angels around the steps of freedom, and liberty produced the blight of slavery, we should regard it like the temptation of the crown of the whole earth to Jesus—a thought to be instantly rejected with unspeakable aversion, in this solemn estimate of right.

We notice two or three particulars in harmony with this general position. It is imperatively demanded of the citizens of this country, to seek the extinction of slavery within its borders, with untiring earnestness, if they would preserve the very ideas which have made this nation what it is, as a living influence in its heart. Men do not often realize the greatness of the calamity, when they partially lose the ideas which have been their inspiration. No loss is so great as the loss of faith



in eternal principles. The life of genius sinks into weakness, if not wild passion; the martyr loses his soul of sacrifice; the disciple faints in his devotion, and turns away from his God, when faith grows dim. To lose the influence of these great ideas, is like tearing the sun from his sphere. And the gloom which would then cover the world, would only be an image of this darkness and desolation in the soul. All the great things in the world have been the result of faith in those grand thoughts of freedom, of holiness, of right, that have inspired their votaries. And where these are not, the whole mind is stricken with idiocy and palsy. When these are gone, the abomination of desolation already stands in the holy place wherein thoughts and deeds have their birth, and the far-seeing mind then can only wait, with tears, the coming of that destruction which shall not leave one stone upon another in the temple which was loved and revered.

And this inspiring faith can only be preserved by constant watchfulness: it cannot live in the presence, the atmosphere of sin,—when silent over the enormity. Wherever slavery exists, there must be ceaseless war against its wrongs, or the sentiment of liberty will gradually die. This is the conclusion of reason and the teaching of experience. Our national history proves it. Liberty has doubtless been faithfully hallowed in the reverence of multitudes. Free principles will vindicate themselves, sooner or later, among this people. Yet the proofs are painfully clear, that something of that faith in the idea of liberty which made the Fathers great, has ceased to exist in these later generations. In the days when the constitution was formed, slavery was permitted to exist, for a little period, that it might prepare itself to die. Whoever studies the sentiment of that day, will see that men no more intended the perpetuation of human slavery in this republic, than again to place the yoke which they had broken upon their own necks. Mark the contrast. One of the first acts of national legislation then, was to prohibit slavery in all that territory which had not been formed into States. In a later time, we admit States that prohibit the abolition of slavery forever. Then, all the territories which belonged to the country were declared to be free. In a later age, we receive new regions, far wider than mighty empires, in which we sanction human bondage, or do what differs only in form from its direct establishment. Then, slavery, as upon its bended knees, pleaded for a brief delay in the execution of the sentence of death which seemed to be issued against it in the fundamental principles of the republic, and the living spirit of the nation. In a later generation, slavery has sometimes assumed the dominion, so that liberty herself has been dumb in its presence. We have nothing to do with parties, in

such statements as these. We only present the simple facts. Is it only a dream, then, to suppose that the very ideas which made us a people might be slowly consumed out of the nation's heart by this canker of slavery? Is it a vain thought of alarm that we are uttering, or is it a solemn warning of one law which is over men and nations—whose proofs are in all ages, and in our own history, too, when we ask for a renewed and perpetual faithfulness to the principle of freedom,—a faithfulness that admits no compromise with slavery,—if we would preserve ourselves or this people from a deep degeneracy.

Another consideration is directly suggested here, why the citizens of this nation should seek the extinction of slavery. A merely silent acquiescence in its claims to exist,—much more their recognition,—in one word, any thing less than an untiring Christian opposition, deadens the moral sense, and tends to abrogate the law of right and justice in the heart of the whole people. Scarcely any word is so popular as compromise, even in the heart of Christendom. And there is one sphere of action, in which it may have a rightful sway, where all must give it homage. In the clashings of outward interests, in most of the strifes of individuals and nations, it is but another name for the sweet spirit of peace,—alike Christian, in its nature and in its manifestations. But when we enter the domain of moral truth, it should be a banished word; shunned there as much as it is welcomed everywhere beside. Conscience never compromises, except when it sins. Jesus, amidst all his gentleness, never looks with his full approval, while one thing is lacking. It is a spiritual law, that an individual soul can never retain one admitted wrong, without serious injury to the whole moral nature. So it is with a state. No moral influence can be more disastrous than the incorporation of a great injustice in the institution of a nation; so that men, by their allegiance to government, seem to be constrained to defend the sin,—and obedience to the law of man requires disobedience to the law of God,—and acts of simple righteousness become acts of treason. A state which throws the sanction of law over injustice, so far as that wrong is concerned, diffuses a universal contagion which is more fearful, we might better say, perhaps, more to be feared than the pestilence. We state a point that many may scarcely regard; but in that deadness to all living sensibility may be found one great proof of its truth. We could scarcely present the special illustrations of the evil which we deplore, without seeming to enter into partisan discussions. Yet crowds of illustrations must occur to all who have carefully observed the history, the legislation, the political movements of the nation. Who can estimate the number of those whose sense of justice, and whose allegiance

to truth have been corrupted by the compromise of pure principles, of the law of God, before the claims of the slave-system? At times, public righteousness almost seems as a moral impossibility, while this mighty temptation to integrity remains. There is no safeguard for the purity of the moral sense of this people, except in a perpetual labor for the overthrow of this great institution of human bondage. We must vindicate the truth, that considerations of right are higher than those of expediency in the government of states, as well as in the life of single souls,—that where justice is brought into question, compromise must only be injustice, under another and a tempting name.

These are considerations which apply to men in all sections of the country, to a greater or less degree. Were we to attempt to show the sad results of slavery upon the moral condition of those who are owners of slaves, or who live in its immediate presence, the materials for the argument are most abundant. Some men *may live* in a land of slavery, and yet be free from its corruptions, as some may live amidst contagion and pestilence, unharmed. But we know the natural results of such exposures of body and of soul. If there is any meaning in the quick beating of the pulse at the name of liberty—any reason in the enthusiasm and sacrifice of her hosts of martyrs—if the creative idea of this people, the fundamental thought of its government was not a splendid cheat,—then slavery is a condition involving degradations and wrongs, which should make men welcome death as a blessed angel of deliverance, in comparison with its woe. We know enough of the thralldom of the soul in the breast of the slave—of the laceration of his purest affections, which must be where slavery is. We know enough of the cruelties and loathsome licentiousness which will be among many of the masters. We know what a system must be that which tempts men to raise human beings—their own flesh and blood—for the slave-market;—and which can extinguish the love of their own children, until they will sell them like cattle. We know what a system must be, which renders it more dangerous to spread the Bible among these benighted three millions of our brothers and our sisters, than for the missionary to go into the thick night of heathenism with the light of life.

We forbear from this whole topic, and from farther special suggestions. We base our whole appeal, we repeat, upon the instant protest of humanity itself against the idea of slavery, and the eternal opposition between it and the law of Christ. The first, every man feels; and the last, however some may qualify their words, we believe that every Christian knows. This want of perception of the absolutely unchristian nature of



the institution of Slavery is a terrible fiction, which results from perpetual compromises of simple truth. Men begin by questioning if religion demands an immediate abolition of human bondage, and then the passage is easy to its toleration, to silence over its wrongs, to admission of its right to live beneath Christian institutions—perhaps to its positive defence.

The call of humanity and of Christ our Lord is the great, imperative CONSIDERATION, the grand, all-powerful MOTIVE for action. Shall it not be heard? It belongs to no section—to no party. It cannot recognize geographical lines. Humanity lives everywhere. Christ's truth is the law for all souls and all climes.

Shall not the call be obeyed? Rather, we ask, who will presume to neglect or disobey it? We do not insist upon special methods of action. We only insist that the protest be decided and clear—in the name of humanity; in the infinitely greater name of Almighty God. Let the action be Christian in its gentleness, but Christian also in its fidelity. Shall the citizens of a nation whose foundation was laid upon the doctrine of Human Rights, practically sanction the idea which a distinguished statesman has advanced with a daring consistency, "that the great thought of the Declaration of Independence is a fiction;" or shall we vindicate that Christian doctrine by a consistent obedience? Shall this land be the last asylum of slavery when driven from other nations, Christian and unchristian, with execrations, or shall it be truly free? Shall we cling to the sin amidst the increasing light of ages, or trample it beneath our feet in the love of liberty, and of man?

Will such a call prevail? As God liveth, it cannot fail. The world is filled with signs of hope. The idea of human rights shakes every throne. Freedom is becoming the omnipotent word. The shouts of the emancipated are heard from the isles of the sea, and across the ocean. The sacred contest for freedom is begun in our own land. There can be no defeat, except through unfaithfulness. It does not become the disciples of the Christian faith to question the supreme power of simple truth, when the whole history of their religion attests it—when its grand purpose is to pour the Spirit of the Lord into the souls of all his followers, as the life of the vine flows into all its branches.

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In the spirit of Freedom, then, which animated our Fathers, and in the name and for the glory of Christ, "who died that we might live,"—it well becomes the Convention of the Con-



gregational Ministers of this ancient Commonwealth, solemnly to declare to the world their deep conviction of THE INJUSTICE AND INHUMANITY of the system of Slavery, and of its absolute repugnance to ALL THE PRINCIPLES OF THE WORD OF GOD: and to implore those who are implicated in it—by their fear of God and their love of man—to break their own bonds, by using their best exertions to give liberty to all captives. And may “the Father of lights” and “of mercies” hasten the day, when, “in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ,” the choral anthem of our land and of the whole world may be, with joy and gratitude unspeakable,—“WHERE THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS, THERE IS LIBERTY!”

CHARLES LOWELL.

CALVIN HITCHCOCK.

RICHARD S. STORRS.

JAMES W. THOMPSON.

SAMUEL M. WORCESTER.

GEORGE W. BRIGGS.

ALONZO HILL.

SAMUEL K. LOTHROP.

## APPENDIX.

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AN extract from the "Madison Papers," relative to the right of suffrage, will illustrate the spirit of the Convention of 1787.

Mr. King wished to know what influence the vote just passed was meant to have on the succeeding part of the Report, concerning the admission of slaves into the rule of representation. He could not reconcile his mind to the Article, if it was to prevent objections to the latter part. The admission of slaves was a most grating circumstance to his mind, and he believed would be so to a great part of the people of America. He had not made a strenuous opposition to it heretofore, because he had hoped that this concession would have produced a readiness, which had not been manifested, to strengthen the General Government, and to mark a full confidence in it. The Report under consideration had, by the tenor of it, put an end to all those hopes. In two great points the hands of the Legislature were absolutely tied. The importation of slaves could not be prohibited. Exports could not be taxed. Is this reasonable? What are the great objects of the general system? First, defence against foreign invasion; secondly, against internal sedition. Shall all the States, then, be bound to defend each, and shall each be at liberty to introduce a weakness which will render defence more difficult? Shall one part of the United States be bound to defend another part, and that other part be at liberty, not only to increase its own danger, but to withhold the compensation for the burden? If slaves are to be imported, shall not the exports produced by their labor supply a revenue the better to enable the General Government to defend their masters? There was so much inequality and unreasonableness in all this, that the people of the Northern States could never be reconciled to it. No candid man could undertake to justify it to them. He had hoped that some accommodation would have taken place on this subject; that at least a time would have been limited for the importation of slaves. He never could agree to let them be imported without limitation, and then be represented in the National Legislature. Indeed, he could so little persuade himself of the rectitude of such a practice, that he was not sure he could assent to it under any circumstances. At all events, either slaves should not be represented, or exports should be taxable.

Mr. Sherman regarded the slave trade as iniquitous; but the point of representation having been settled after much difficulty and deliber-

ation, he did not think himself bound to make opposition; especially as the present Article, as amended, did not preclude any arrangement whatever on that point, in another place of the Report.

Mr. Madison objected to one for every forty thousand inhabitants as a perpetual rule. The future increase of population, if the Union should be permanent, will render the number of Representatives excessive.

Mr. Gorham. It is not to be supposed that the Government will last so long as to produce this effect. Can it be supposed that this vast country, including the western territory, will, one hundred and fifty years hence, remain one nation?

Mr. Ellsworth. If the Government should continue so long, alterations may be made in the Constitution in the manner proposed in a subsequent article.

Mr. Sherman and Mr. Madison moved to insert the words, "not exceeding," before the words, "one for every forty thousand;" which was agreed to, *nem. con.*

Mr. Gouverneur Morris moved to insert "free" before the word "inhabitants." Much, he said, would depend on this point. He never would concur in upholding domestic slavery. It was a nefarious institution. It was the curse of Heaven on the States where it prevailed. Compare the free regions of the Middle States, where a rich and noble cultivation marks the prosperity and happiness of the people, with the misery and poverty which overspread the barren wastes of Virginia, Maryland, and the other States having slaves. Travel through the whole continent, and you behold the prospect continually varying with the appearance and disappearance of slavery. The moment you leave the Eastern States, and enter New York, the effects of the institution become visible. Passing through the Jerseys and entering Pennsylvania, every criterion of superior improvement witnesses the change. Proceed southwardly, and every step you take, through the great regions of slaves, presents a desert increasing with the increasing proportion of these wretched beings. Upon what principle is it that the slaves shall be computed in the representation? Are they men? Then make them citizens, and let them vote. Are they property? Why, then, is no other property included? The houses in this city (Philadelphia) are worth more than all the wretched slaves who cover the rice swamps of South Carolina. The admission of slaves into the representation, when fairly explained, comes to this, that the inhabitant of Georgia and South Carolina who goes to the coast of Africa, and, in defiance of the most sacred laws of humanity, tears away his fellow creatures from their dearest connections, and damns them to the most cruel bondage, shall have more votes in a government instituted for the protection of the rights of mankind, than the citizen of Pennsylvania or New Jersey, who views with a laudable horror so nefarious a practice. He would add, that domestic slavery is the most prominent feature in the aristocratic countenance of the proposed Constitution. The vassalage of the poor has ever been the favorite offspring of aristocracy. And what is the proposed compensation to the Northern States, for a sacrifice of every principle of right, of every impulse of humanity? They are to bind themselves to march their militia for the defence of the Southern States, for their

defence against those very slaves of whom they complain. They must supply vessels and seamen, in case of foreign attack. The Legislature will have indefinite power to tax them by excises, and duties on imports; both of which will fall heavier on them than on the Southern inhabitants; for the bohea tea used by a Northern freeman will pay more tax than the whole consumption of the miserable slave, which consists of nothing more than his physical subsistence and the rag that covers his nakedness. On the other side, the Southern States are not to be restrained from importing fresh supplies of wretched Africans, at once to increase the danger of attack, and the difficulty of defence; nay, they are to be encouraged to it, by an assurance of having their votes in the National Government increased in proportion; and are, at the same time, to have their exports and their slaves exempt from all contributions for the public service. Let it not be said, that direct taxation is to be proportioned to representation. It is idle to suppose that the General Government can stretch its hand directly into the pockets of the people, scattered over so vast a country. They can only do it through the medium of exports, imports and excises. For what, then, are all the sacrifices to be made? He would sooner submit himself to a tax for paying for all the negroes in the United States, than saddle posterity with such a Constitution.

Mr. Dayton seconded the motion. He did it, he said, that his sentiments on the subject might appear, whatever might be the fate of the amendment.

Mr. Sherman did not regard the admission of the negroes into the ratio of representation, as liable to such insuperable objections. It was the freemen of the Southern States who were, in fact, to be represented according to the taxes paid by them, and the negroes are only included in the estimate of the taxes. This was his idea of the matter.

Mr. Pinckney considered the fisheries, and the Western frontier, as more burthensome to the United States than the slaves. He thought this could be demonstrated, if the occasion were a proper one.

Mr. Wilson thought the motion premature. An agreement to the clause would be no bar to the object of it.

On the question, on the motion to insert "free" before "inhabitants,"—New Jersey, aye—1; New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, no—10.—*Madison Papers*, pp. 1261-66.









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